



---

## Night in Bombay

---



NIGHT  
IN  
BOMBAY

BY  
LOUIS BROMFIELD

GROSSET & DUNLAP  
PUBLISHERS NEW YORK  
*By arrangement with Harper & Brothers*

· NIGHT IN BOMBAY

*Copyright, 1939, 1940, by Louis Bromfield*

*Printed in the United States of America*

*All rights in this book are reserved. It may not be used for dramatic, motion- or talking-picture purposes without written authorization from the holder of these rights. Nor may the book or parts thereof be reproduced in any manner whatsoever without permission in writing. For information address: Harper & Brothers, 49 East 33rd Street, New York, N. Y.*

*This story appeared serially  
under the title of BOMBAY NIGHTS*

*For*

JEAN WHITE

WITH THE LOVE, GRATITUDE AND DEVOTION

OF ALL THE BROMFIELDS

FROM

LOUIS BROMFIELD

\*



---

## Night in Bombay

---





---

---

His luggage was all ready to be taken ashore, his cabin in order and now he stood on the upper deck just beneath the bridge watching the flying fish scud out of each jade green land swell of the Arabian Gulf like swift pencils of silver and disappear again in glittering jets of spray. He was a tall, good-looking fellow with square shoulders over which his Hanover Street tailor found no need to put any padding. His clothes said "London" in a discreet whisper, but you knew at once that he was an American. There was something in the blue eyes, the pitch of the chin, but more than anything in the generous, full curve of the lips and the tiny lines about the eyes which betrayed him. His face told you that he came of a people who were gamblers, who were sometimes reckless, and a people who knew how to laugh. He was the American who knew his way about the world, and so in many ways he was dangerous, to himself perhaps more than to others.

He didn't think of himself any longer as wild: he believed quite earnestly that he had settled down. In fact he was rather proud of himself that in his early thirties he had pulled himself together suddenly and made sense. That was the reason he had packed all his luggage carefully, even meticulously with his own hand, instead of asking the steward to do it; that was the reason he had carefully pulled out every drawer and left the door of the cupboard open to show that nothing had been left behind. He did things like that as an exercise, as a kind of discipline—to keep himself in order and prove to himself that he was a serious fellow, organized and efficient. It made him feel that he had developed something his father called "character," which he knew only meant counting ten before he acted: it meant not going off the deep end the moment the prospect of fun appeared on the horizon. Certainly, on this trip he meant to be good; it was a test. He meant to show his father that he had settled down.

So, at the moment, he felt virtuous and even proud, and fresh and cool and clean, although the heat was beginning to rise—the strange, dead, damp heat which hung over Bombay and the Arabian Gulf even in the winter season. No, he was being a sound business man, cool, shrewd, serious, on a tour through the Orient, visiting agencies of his father's company in Bombay, Singapore, Medan Deli, Sourabaya, Macassar and Tonkin.

A voice beside him said, "Good morning," and he turned to find Mrs. Trollope standing beneath his elbow. She was a tiny woman but very tough, who came from Sydney. She was on her way from London to Bombay to stop off for a fortnight and then go on to Australia. That much she had told him and no more. He really didn't care very much what her plans were, but it annoyed him vaguely that she seemed to think that he was curious. He thought she must be about forty, but her dead brown hair and weathered skin made her perfectly ageless. She wore rather worn expensive clothes without knowing quite how to wear them. And she played excellent bridge and better poker.

"Good morning," he said. "Beautiful morning."

"Yes," said Mrs. Trollope. "But it's always fine here this time of the year."

"Funny things—flying fish."

"Yes," Mrs. Trollope wasn't much gifted in the appreciation of nature. She sniffed the air. "Ah!" she said. "Smell it? That Bombay smell."

He sniffed and became aware of a smell he knew at once—a curious mixed smell faintly dominated by the smell of drying fish.

"Bombay duck."

"Yes."

But there was more to the smell than that. There was in it the compounded odors of spice and wood smoke, of jasmine and marigold and of dust and copra and cow dung smoke. And for Wainwright there was much more in it—there was the strange excitement of memories—memories of parties, of drinking, of easy seductions, of extraordinary nights beneath a sky of blue velvet in which stars glittered like diamonds, of rides in gherries, down from some garden suspended on the side of Malabar Hill, to the Hotel Taj Mahal; memories of an immense, cool room of white marble high

above the bay. The man who a little while before had packed so meticulously and felt so virtuous, trembled a little with apprehension. It was, decidedly, a dangerous smell, but deliciously exciting. Even in the heat, a little shiver ran through his blood. There was no smell in the world quite like it.

"Have you seen the spy this morning?" asked Mrs. Trollope.

"No."

"I haven't either but I don't think she'll be looking for me after last night."

Bill chuckled, "No, I should think not."

He laughed now at the memory of the scene in the smoking room, although he hadn't laughed at the time because it had shocked him. The spy had forced her way into the poker game with himself and Mrs. Trollope and the little Maharajah of Jellapore, and Gibson, the trainer of the Maharajah's horses and Joey, the Maharajah's A.D.C. And then, sitting there, swarthy and covered with dirty diamonds and glowering, she had quarreled with everybody and even accused poor harmless, tipsy, little Joey of cheating. There wasn't any way of getting rid of her until Mrs. Trollope lost her temper and told her to get the hell out of the smoking room.

At the memory of the scene Bill laughed again—Mrs. Trollope like a small terrier worrying the Baroness who was like a fat elderly pug dog. And in the end the terrier had won, for the pug dog had become bewildered by the attack, and gathering up all her bags and cigarette cases and trinkets and bangles, she had gone off to her cabin. There was only one element in the whole scene which spoiled the complete absurdity of it. The figure of the Baroness, rattling, slinking and waddling away from the table across the smoking room had suddenly seemed, despite her offensiveness, pitifully defeated and broken, and, above all else, lonely. He had thought, "That sort of thing has been happening to her all her life. She must have been ugly and unattractive and hateful even as a baby."

And before she was well out of the door they had forgotten her and gone on with the poker game.

Mrs. Trollope was speaking again.

"Do you think she's really a spy?"

"No, she's too obviously made up like one."

Mrs. Trollope snorted, "I'd like to know what her history really is."

"She says she was born in Prague."

"I should think she came from Middle Europe."

"She's got a fine German accent for an Egyptian Baroness."

Mrs. Trollope laughed and lighted a cigarette. She did it efficiently, quickly, with an economy of movement, like a man. When she played bridge or poker she lighted one cigarette from another while the pile of butts grew into a small mountain beside her.

Puffing, she said, "It's very queer, her going to Bombay all alone—just for the ride."

"I should think she's been doing that all her life."

"Well, I've been in Egypt a good many times and I never heard of her."

"Cairo is a pretty complex town. You'd have to live there a lifetime to know all the intricacies of Cairo society."

"Anyway, there aren't any Barons among the Egyptians. Egyptians haven't got any titles."

"No, they buy them sometimes from needy Italians."

She was silent then, her attention caught by the spectacle on the foredeck below them. Lazily Bill thought how vindictively women could hate each other. The men at the poker party had forgotten the Baroness once her fat round-shouldered figure had disappeared through the door of the smoking room, but Mrs. Trollope had gone on hating her. She'd probably never forget the Baroness and when the opportunity arose, if it ever did, she would do her a dirty trick. It was just as well they were at the end of the voyage; people on the ship had begun to be bored and get on each other's nerves. They had begun to tell stories about one another.

On the foredeck below them everything was being put in readiness for landing, and Wainwright watched the spectacle with a faint sense of regret. So long as you were on a boat, life was simple and uncomplicated. People couldn't telephone you and you couldn't get involved in rendezvous you didn't want to keep, in escapades which really had no interest for you. He always behaved himself on a ship, perhaps because he had spent so much time on ships. He grinned and thought, "It's the one place to get away

from it all." As soon as he landed some sort of trouble would start again, some incredible complication he had never dreamed of.

It had never occurred to him that it was not only that he attracted preposterous adventures; he went out looking for them. That may have been the reason why long ago he had acquired the label of "black sheep."

The Goanese crew below them was coiling ropes and opening hatches, loosening winches and rattling chains. The third class passengers—Levantines, three or four thrifty Scots not wasting any money on their passage, a few rather scrawny bespectacled Indian students and a sprinkling of Moslems with beards dyed freshly red as a sign that they were returning from Mecca—had been thrust behind a barrier and stood there pressed together in the heat watching the hazy outlines of shore and islands emerging from the heat mist.

"Well," said Mrs. Trollope, "I won't have to listen to 'Alone' any more."

Wainwright laughed, "I'll miss little Jelly."

"Oh, you'll be seeing him."

Night after night they had gone to the cabin of the Maharajah of Jellapore for champagne, and night after night they had listened while the dark little man, with tears in his eyes, had played a sentimental tune called "Alone" over and over on his expensive electric gramophone. The nickname of "Jelly" suited him. It was a name known all over India and the Casinos, night clubs and race courses of Europe.

"It's not a bad tune if you don't run it into the ground."

"I found out why he wept when he played it. The tears were tears of self-pity."

"Why self-pity? He's got everything."

"No, he hasn't. He has a fixation for 'Alone' because he's been impotent for six months. He told me so."

Mrs. Trollope chuckled, "I get the point." It was a wicked, vindictive sound. Turning, she pointed with her cigarette. "Look, the palms of Juhu." And on the other side, "And there's Elephanta."

On the left out of the heat haze, the cocoanut palms swam above the muddy water of the bay as in a mirage, and on the right the

bulk of Elephanta Island arose. At sight of them Bill felt a shiver of anticipation run through his blood again.

"You know Bombay pretty well?" he asked over his shoulder.

A look of amusement illumined her face, as if she were going to tell him something remarkably interesting. He had already learned that when such a look came into the small bright eyes set in the weathered face, she was about to relate a shady story or a piece of scandal. This time it died almost at once and she said, dully, "Yes, I do."

For a time they watched the busy scene on the deck below them. Presently she said, "What do your friends call you?"

"Bill. You might as well call me that too. We'll be seeing each other in Bombay."

"Maybe."

"Why not? We can't miss each other—what with the Willingdon Club, the Taj bar and the races."

She turned sharply toward him. "I might as well tell you. If you're going around with the English much, you won't see me."

"I won't be. I don't go half around the world to spend my time with Englishmen I'd never see in England."

"Do you know many Indians?"

"Yes, I do."

"Like 'em?"

"Yes. They seem to me just like anybody else."

She turned back again looking at the muddy water of the bay. "I told you I was going to stay with my sister. Well, my sister married an Indian. She's an Australian to begin with, so we don't see much of the English . . . for both reasons."

"I see," said Bill. "What is he—a merchant or a professor?"

"He isn't anything anymore. He was a Rajah, but he's dead. She's got a palace on Malabar Hill next to the Nizam's palace."

"Is she . . . retired?"

"Yes. They've started her with a small pension."

Then through the heat and the laziness of his brain, his memory began to function, and he remembered a big, handsome, rather blowsy blonde woman—very blonde, the voluptuous peaches and cream type, with blue eyes, coming into Maxim's in Paris, marvel-

ously dressed and wearing wonderful jewels. That was the first time he had ever seen her.

He said, "But I know her. At least I've met her—Chandrapore . . . Chandragar."

"Chandragar. . . . Nelly is her name . . . Nelly Chandragar."

"She's not much like you."

"No, she's not. Nobody ever believes we're sisters. She's the Circassian houri type—right out of a Moslem paradise." She threw her cigarette into the muddy water of the bay and said, "I've got to go below and check up on my luggage before the harpies come aboard and seize it."

"You haven't told me your name," said Wainwright, "in case we do meet in Bombay."

"It's Stitch," said Mrs. Trollope, "Stitch Trollope. I got it as a little girl in my father's lumber camp in the bush. The lumberjacks used to call me that as a kid. It always stuck. Toodle-oo." And she disappeared around the corner of the smoking room.

For a moment he stood looking after her, grinning. He meant to look her up in Bombay whether she desired it or not. There was something hard about her and tough. He even liked her sexlessness—that she was neither a man nor woman, or if she had once been a woman, she had had enough of it and renounced it; that she had no coquetry and you could have a good laugh with her without becoming involved. He even liked her rather low mind and rough stories. "Who," he wondered, "was Mr. Trollope and what has become of him." He imagined that Mr. Trollope, whoever or wherever he was, had never counted for much in Stitch's life.

"Stitch," he said, half aloud. "A Stitch in time."

The deck about and below him began to fill with passengers who by now seemed old friends. They leaned over the rail looking at the city which had begun to appear out of the haze—the Taj Mahal Hotel, the Readymoney Building, the Yacht Club, the Gateway of India and the green eminence of Malabar Hill, dotted with bungalows and the palaces of the Maharajahs with the Towers of Silence at the foot of them all like the coffin which was carried among the guests at an Egyptian banquet. Life and death in India, more than anywhere else in the world, went hand in hand. He



sighed, "Here today and gone tomorrow." The state of life or the fact of death could not have much importance to millions of small dark people who owned no more than a loin cloth and lived and died without ever having enough to eat one day of their lives. Yes, Bombay was fantastic and romantic and extraordinary things happened there, if you didn't notice the coolies, the women and the children sleeping on sidewalks and in gutters as you drove home from a good party about sunrise.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw coming toward him the Indian woman they said was a dancer. She was a small woman, dressed in a black sari and wearing a great many silver bracelets. She walked superbly, scarcely seeming to walk at all, but to glide with the smooth easy motion of a cobra. She was neither very young nor very beautiful, but there was a perfection about the figure, the great dark eyes, and the *camellia skin which held the glance of* passers-by. All through the voyage Bill, like the other passengers, had noticed her, and it gave him a frank pleasure now to watch her coming along the deck toward him. It was not the attraction of a pretty woman; he was not conscious of her as a woman at all. The pleasure he experienced was more like the pleasure one finds in contemplating a fine picture or hearing superb music. She was a work of art. In a way she was India. They said she was a dancer and that her husband was a scientist in Bombay. That was all he could find out about her.

She was opposite him now and interrupted his staring with a scarcely perceptible smile, as if she were saying, "Good-bye. I hope you enjoy India." Then she was gone past him in, all the serene dignity which had kept her aloof and apart from the other passengers throughout the long voyage.

The sight of her made him feel a sudden pang of self-reproach. "Maybe this time," he thought, "I really ought to find out something about India instead of just playing around Bombay." Bombay wasn't anything. It wasn't India, or East or West, but an extraordinary muddle of everything on earth.

A slap on the back roused him and a voice said, "Good-bye, laddie, and good luck." It was the Scotsman (he couldn't remember his name) who had a Shell agency in Burma—a tough, beefy man who looked singularly at home already.

"Don't say good-bye yet," said Bill, "I'll see you at the bar at the Taj Mahal."

"No, you won't. I'm going to pick up some kit at the Army and Navy Stores and be on my way. I'm only two-thirds of the way home. If you turn up in Rangoon, give me a buzz."

"Okay. Good luck."

The American missionary and his wife from the Punjab smiled and waved good-bye to him. They disapproved of his drinking and the endless poker games with Stitch and Jelly and Joey and Gibson but, now that the voyage was over and everyone was separating, they smiled and waved. That was sporting of them. They must be good sports to be working up there in the north among the hard-boiled Pathans. It was a lot easier to work among Hindus. When the woman—a little thin person in a black alpaca dress—smiled, it was a funny crooked smile and there was a look in the eyes, a twinkle that was infinitely human and personal. For a moment there was something in it oddly familiar. He could not say why. He had never seen her before he came aboard the boat and since then he had scarcely noticed the prim alpaca-clad figure. It wasn't only that the crooked smile was familiar, it was more than that. And it reminded him of something or someone. He looked toward her again but she had turned away and all he could see was the thin, tired, back leaning over the rail as a cutter came alongside the ship.

Looking down he could make out on the deck of the cutter, two or three port officers, a group of Indians in brocaded and embroidered ceremonial dress and two *chuprassies* in scarlet and gold, half buried beneath dozens of garlands of marigolds and jasmine, and in the midst of them a tall and good-looking young English officer, blonde and clad in spotless white with a white topi and a great deal of gold lace. He carried a sword and two or three large official envelopes in his hand. He stood taller than anyone on the deck and he had a kind of blonde personal radiance about him by which he outshone all the others—even the Indians in their brocade and jewels and scarlet turbans.

"Gosh," thought Bill. "The British Empire does itself well."

Then the cutter disappeared beneath the side of the ship and he became aware out of the corner of his eye that the Baroness was

coming toward him. It was too late to escape. He looked fixedly toward the advancing skyline, but these tactics gained him nothing and at once he understood that he should have known better. The Baroness had the hide of rhinoceros. Still he kept watching the dim and distant outline of the Taj Mahal Hotel—until he felt her standing there beside him, so close that her fat body pressed against his. In the heat she smelled of heavy scent and perspiration and the dead odor of smoked Egyptian tobacco.

"Good morning," she said. "Hot, aind't it?"

"Oh, good morning. Yes, it's hot in the bay."

"Not so much breeze."

"No, not much air."

He tried looking away from her but it did no good; anyway, he knew what she looked like. He knew her short fat body, the opaque oily skin, the dyed red hair that looked like an old tired wig but wasn't, the muddy greenish eyes and the bangles, rings, bracelets, brooches, earrings and the brocade bag with greasy stains mottling the design.

"Vere are you staying in Bombay?"

"The hotel, I suppose."

"The Taj Mahal?"

"Yes, the Taj Mahal."

"For long?"

"I don't know." He wanted to say, "None of your damned business," but he didn't.

Then she said with a clumsy coquetry, "Maybe ve could haf dinner togedder some time?"

"Yes, maybe. I'll be pretty busy. You see I'm here on business."

"Vat business?"

"Oil."

"Oh, oil! Fuel oil?"

"Yes, fuel oil and other things."

He thought, wanting to laugh, "If she's a spy, she's an awfully bad one."

"Vell, I expect ve'll be seeing each odder."

It should have been a parting remark but it wasn't. She still remained, and he noticed again the musky scent she used and thought, "I suppose that's patchouli—the scent opera singers and

spies use in old-fashioned novels." And then he saw why she remained. The handsome young A.D.C. in white and gold with the sword was coming toward them. With him, just a little behind him, was Al, the radio officer, a wide grin on his humorous Irish face.

Al said something to the handsome young man and as he came up to Bill he saluted and said, "Mr. William Wainwright?"

"Yes," said Bill, thinking, "maybe they remember the old scandal. Maybe they're not going to let me land." And he wished that the Baroness would go away, although he knew that at that moment dynamite would not have moved her. She stood there, stricken with curiosity, all her vulgar soul bedazzled, fascinated.

"I'm Lieutenant Forsythe," said the young man. "The compliments of His Excellency, the Viceroy, sir." And he handed Bill a large envelope. "And the compliments of His Excellency, the Governor of the Bombay Presidency," and handed him a second envelope. "You can give me the answer to the Governor's note, sir."

"Thank you," said Bill, a little awed. Turning away a little, he tore open the envelope and read it.

His Excellency, the Governor of the Bombay Presidency would like him to come to lunch on Wednesday, the third.

"Will you tell His Excellency I should be delighted to lunch?"

"Thank you," said the handsome young man. "Is there anything I can do for you, sir?"

"No," said Bill, "thank you very much. I'll be all right. You see I know Bombay quite well."

"It's not a bad place," said the young man, "if you don't have to stay through the monsoon. If there's nothing I can do, I'll be off." Again he saluted.

"Thank you again," said Bill.

"Good day," said the British Empire and walked away.

The Baroness stood goggle-eyed. The grin on the face of Al, the radio operator, grew wider. "A toff, eh?" he said. "Getting letters from Viceroys and things."

"I don't know what it's all about," said Bill.

The Baroness said to Al, "No message for me?"

"No, nothing."

She shook her head from side to side and made a clucking noise. "Very fonny! Very fonny! I haf been expecting a message all de

vay from Aden." The shake of the head, the clucking sound, the look in the green eyes, were all full of implications—that Al had received a message and destroyed it, that he had been bribed to keep it from her, that he was in some colossal plot, a plot against her which embraced the whole world—Europeans, Americans, Africans, Indians, Malays. They were all against her. But there was also the defiant implication that she could defeat them all at their own game.

Al grinned and with a kind of satisfaction said, "It won't come now. The radio bureau is closed."

"It's fonny—very fonny!" And she suddenly turned and left him.

"We've had some funny ones," said Al, "but she's the top." The perpetual grin widened, "Get a load of what's coming."

Down the deck toward them came little Jelly. The rather loud checked racing clothes which he had worn throughout the voyage, were gone. The Maharajah and Joey, the A.D.C., were both in black *atchkans* and white *jodpores*. Jelly wore a *puggree* of scarlet and gold and Joey a plain one of scarlet. The Maharajah's dark little face and tiny, shrewd, black eyes, peeped out from among garland after garland of jasmine and marigold. As suited the difference in rank, Joey wore only three slim garlands. Still a little drunk, his face no longer was a fine copper color; it was the green of corroded copper. He hung his head like a child just punished. Gone were the two rulers of Longchamps and Epsom, of the Casinos of Deauville and Cannes. Behind them walked Gibson, the trainer, a big beefy man with a leathery face, clad in a loud checked suit and maroon necktie.

"Look," said Al. "The father and mother of the Universe is going back to work, and does he hate it. We've had him on board for ten trips and he's always tight from Aden on."

Al's grin widened and Bill wanted to laugh, and then thought better of it. There was something pathetic in the spectacle of Jelly, whom God had meant to be a bookmaker, returning to India to be a king.

Every year it happened. In the cold season the Maharajah returned to be hailed as the father and mother of his people. Because of them, he would stay at home in India for three or four months, bored, going over accounts, giving dinners which bored

him in Bombay or Delhi or Jellapore, occasionally indulging in a first-class orgy. He had hung on to the life he loved to the very last minute, drinking champagne in his cabin, playing "Alone" over and over on the gramophone. And now the ship was docking and he had to emerge at last in full splendor, smothered in jasmine and marigold—the king of kings, the father and mother of his people, attended by tipsy Joey and his horse trainer.

Al and Bill leaned back on the rail. The Maharajah passed them and as he passed in all his splendor and majesty, the dark little face moved out of the garlands, a little like the head of a turtle, turned sidewise toward Al and Bill, and one dark eye closed. Then he and Joey passed on and as Gibson came up to them he said, "Come and look at the pier. Half of Jellapore is here—the Dewan, three wives and all the heirs and relatives. Come on."

The great ship was tying up now, close to the pier, still at last after the long voyage down the wintry channel, through the stormy Bay of Biscay, the gray-blue Mediterranean, the burning Red Sea and the sultry heat of the Arabian Gulf. The voyage was over and seven hundred passengers of all colors and races and creeds and nationalities were jammed together waiting to pour down the gangplank into the dusty, sun-baked city. On the pier and the pier-shed roof hundreds of faces peered up at the splendor of the ship, each face bright with a look of wonder and expectancy—faces which were brown and coffee-colored, yellow and sickly black tinged with malaria. They were clad in all colors and all fashions from the gleaming white of Hanover Square tailors to the dirty rags that scarcely preserved the modesty of the scrawny coolies. Here and there gleamed the scarlet and gold of the *chuprassies* and the brilliant poison green and candy pink *puggrees* of the Rajputs, the white stiff turbans from the north, fresh and glistening in the perpetual sunshine of winter. And a little to one side of the gangplank, like a flower garden, gathered the party which had come down from the hot inland plateau to welcome home their father and mother, the Lord of Creation—little "Jelly."

This group stood apart in a little place cleared and reserved appropriately for the reception of a powerful and wealthy prince. In the little group there were a dozen Sikh bodyguards, twice the height of Jelly, clad in scarlet uniforms with gold turbans and ten

foot bannered lances, and in front of them, a little cluster of shy and giggling women in brilliantly colored saris—the wives and their ladies-in-waiting, and at the side another group which included a pompous fellow, wide of girth who was probably the Dewan, a thin, worried man who was steward of the palace, and a chorus of small, quite black servants in azure blue and silver.

At sight of the bright spectacle on the quay, the tingling sensation of excitement swept over Bill once more, followed quickly by that feeling of delight which India always brought to him: all this was far away from the West and its drabness, its quarrels, its greediness, its depressions, its peculiar misery that was worse than the swarming misery of the East because it fed on the soul and the spirit instead of the body. Always at first sight of this absurd spectacle he thought, "I never want to leave it again. I never want to go back to the boring drabness of the West."

But this time a small voice answered him, "But it's different this time. You're settled down now. No nonsense, no adventures. You're making good. When your job is finished, you're going to take the first boat on your way back to steadiness and work."

A small thin voice beside him said, "It's always a pretty sight. I tried to describe it to the folks back home but it's hard. They didn't understand why I wanted to come back."

It was the little missionary woman again, drab as an alpaca sparrow, but for the bright blue in her eyes.

"I feel the same way," said Bill.

"Have you been out before?"

"Twice. Once I stayed a long time."

"The Pathan *puggrees* I like best. They always look so fresh and clean and smart . . . just like a wonderful new hat, fresh from the millinery store."

Surprised, he looked at her and saw her eyes were shining more brightly. From the look of her, you'd never have dreamed that anything as frivolous as millinery interested her. Then the expression in her eyes made him think again of someone—he could not think who—someone, a man or a woman whom he knew very well, who had the same bright, human, selfless look. Someone it was who was good but never a prig, someone whom he had loved and respected. The shadowy memory tormented him.

He heard her voice again, speaking with a note of apology, "Mebbe it's because the Pathans come from up north in my country."

Then suddenly she was gone, lost among the restless, pushing passengers and the coolies swarming up the gangplanks and all over the great, white ship, screaming and yelling in their soiled white uniforms, thrusting their ravenous dark faces into the faces of the passengers, yelling, "Luggage! Luggage! Baggage! Baggage! Sahib! Memsahib! Luggage! Luggage!"

The little woman in alpaca had slipped away but her face was still with him, very clear in all the heat and confusion.

Jelly and Joey, in all their finery and garlands, were now advancing with a tipsy semblance of majesty down the gangplank, and at sight of them, the waiting flower garden on the pier below shivered, trembled in the heat and became suddenly a scene of brilliant animation. The scarlet and gold Sikhs drew themselves up like brilliant red lilies; the black servants in azure and silver threw themselves into the dust and touched their foreheads to the ground like heavy-belled campanulas; the multicolored wives and their ladies-in-waiting, the fat Dewan and the palace steward bent over slightly, joined their palms together, like a whole garden swaying in the breeze. They were welcoming home from the gambling Casinos and the race courses their lord and master, their father and mother, the king of kings—the slightly tipsy Maharajah of Jellapore.

Jelly, still moving unsteadily, reached the foot of the gangplank and, with a faint inclination which sent all of the garlands swaying again, acknowledged the extraordinary animation with which the whole garden had been seized at sight of his majestic presence. Behind moved Joey, quite drunk, grinning and bowing with his palms joined together. And after him Gibson, the Cockney trainer, in his loud checked suit, his London hat tilted back on his head.

After a moment while greetings were exchanged, the flower garden began to create a new pattern. The red and gold Sikhs performed a military figure dividing themselves into two groups. The Maharajah and the Dewan took a position just behind them, followed closely by Joey and the palace steward, and after them all the women—the wives, the ladies-in-waiting, still giggling and



chattering, and their servants. The rear was closed by Sikhs and the flower garden started on its way into the shadows of the last customs house.

At about the same time, Bill heard a familiar voice saying, "Good day, Sahib! You are my father and mother, Sahib! I am always your servant, Sahib!"

It was Silas!

Silas was a tall, very thin and very black Tamil who had been converted to Christianity. He was almost handsome, with the look of a half-starved chicken hawk, and like most "boys" was ageless. On his head he wore a shabby black tarboosh with no tassel, and from the tattered filthy khaki suit he wore, one who did not know him would have said that he had been for months and years without work. But Bill knew better. This was only a "costume," the one Silas laid aside to wear when he came to greet old employers. It was designed deliberately to give the effect of starvation and extreme poverty.

The sight of his old bearer depressed him for a moment. He had meant to do without a bearer, although everyone said such a thing was impossible. Certainly he had meant to escape Silas because Silas was a liar, a thief, a hypocrite, a gossip and a petty black-mailer. Silas, who wrote twice a year to say that his enormous family of children and his wife and his parents and his wife's parents and all their grandparents who were dependent on him for food and shelter were starving. You couldn't take his stories of misfortune too literally because he himself seemed so uncertain as to the exact number of his offspring. Sometimes there were eleven, sometimes nine, sometimes seven. No, Bill wasn't pleased at seeing Silas. He had meant to escape from him this time—Silas who could become like the Old Man of the Sea.

"Where did you come from?" he asked the bearer.

"Bombay, Sahib."

"I thought you lived in Madras?"

"Yes, Sahib, all my family lives there . . . all my starving children and parents and grandparents." He would have gone on cataloguing them but Bill stopped him. "I know, I know," he said. "How did you know I was on this boat?"

"Have friend who works in big steamship office. Friend give me

lists of passengers. List comes by air mail from London. Saw Sahib's name. Came to welcome him. You are my father and mother, sahib, and the father and mother of my children, my wife, my parents. . . ." The cataloguing was beginning again.

"No, thanks. Come along. You can look after my baggage, anyway."

A gleam came into the solid black pupils of Silas' eyes. He had a job, the kind of job he liked, with a good-natured sahib, who didn't count annas or even rupees, or grumble over the *dhobi's* bill. He and his wife and children would be well off for another year. Silas, a lean Afghan hound, loped happily behind Bill to the cabin where Bill turned the luggage over to him.

"Don't let the coolies cheat you. I'll meet you on the dock."

"No cheat," said Silas. The dark face opened wide in a glitter of white teeth, and the bearer vanished in the crowd.

It wasn't a grin of gratitude, Bill knew; there wasn't much place for gratitude in the lives of people like Silas, living most of their lives without enough to eat, keeping a roof over the head and food in the mouths of a dozen relatives on less than ten cents a day. No, it was a grin of satisfaction, at having put something over—at having found out that business about the passenger list, over having caught Bill himself.

"Yes," he thought. "I'm a sap and he knows it. He knows damned well I'll keep him on after the luggage is taken care of." Grinning, he thought, "Well, I can afford it."

Then he saw Stitch coming toward him. She had changed her cloths at the last minute and appeared clad in an expensively cut but rather shabby suit of white. She was certainly a plain woman, and a somewhat weatherbeaten one, but she had a shadow of tired radiance about her which made you glad to see her. He had the impression that at some time in her life something terrible had happened to her, something which had extinguished all folly, all coquetry, all femininity; perhaps even warmth and humanity had been snuffed out.

She had a cigarette hanging from her lips and said, "Come on. Let's go ashore and get through this customs business."

They pushed their way through the crowd to the head of the gangway, and slipped, one after the other, like coins in a slot

machine, into the line going down the gangway to the pier. As they came from under the shadow of the deck, the sun struck their shoulders like liquid fire.

Below them the pier was crowded. The cranes of the ship were already working, swinging the cases and crates down from the high white ship. The Indian sun glared against the concrete and metal work of the pier and back into their aching eyes. The line of passengers coming down the gangway became jammed and from ahead of them came a warm whiff of that peculiar strong odor of the Baroness—a blend of mustiness, perspiration and patchouli. They heard her voice complaining, "That young man stepped on my foot."

Leaning out, Bill could see the young man, a very skinny Parsee with a muddy complexion, apologetic and embarrassed by the loudness of the Baroness' hoarse voice.

Behind them a gruff voice said, "Get on with it. Are we going to stay here all day in the sun?" And Bill felt a swift wave of irritation that comes to people in India, suddenly without warning, when something which is India seems to bare all the nerves.

"That bloody bitch!" said Stitch, and then the line began to move again.

They came to the end of the gangplank and Stitch, with an Australian lawlessness, stepped outside the barrier that kept the passengers in line and made as if to go directly into the shelter of the customs shed.

The voice of a Eurasian customs officer came out of the heat. The man was running toward her, crying out, "Look out, lady, there's a box. . . ."

It was the last word he ever spoke. The boom of the great crane swung round and somewhere a cable snapped. The man who had the fraction of a second earlier been running toward Stitch, shouting a warning to her, no longer existed, save as a hand, a single hand, reaching out from beneath the heavy crate which had fallen on him. Bill saw it all with a horrible clarity, the heavy crate with a truck inside it, the stenciled legend—"General Motors"—and the hand which moved convulsively for a second, then collapsed like a small animal that had been shot, and then was still and limp above a thin trickle of blood.

And he saw Stitch in her spotless white suit collapse into the dust and cinders of the pier, her skirt and jacket spotted with red.

The coolies began to crowd around, chattering and screaming, and Bill picked up Stitch and yelling, "God-damn it! Get out of the way, you bastards," carried her into the kind shade of the pier shed. And as he carried her he knew in a sudden flash, the face he had been searching for, the eyes that were like the bright eyes of the little missionary woman. It was the face and eyes of Homer Merrill, who once, long ago, had been his greatest friend.

He laid Stitch on one of the low tables among the baggage and bawled at the man near him, "Go get the quarantine doctor." Then he thought, pushing back his topee, "A lousy omen!" And again, "If she'd stayed in the line where she belonged that poor bastard wouldn't have been killed."

Between Madras and the Deccan in the middle of Hyderabad it rained suddenly with no warning at all out of heavy black clouds which had somehow found their way over the western ghats without dropping their burden of moisture on the narrow strip of land along the Arabian Gulf. It was that rare thing—a false monsoon—occurring in the middle of the dry season, and at first it brought a sense of relief, turning the thick dust into mud and gathering among the red rocks in pools which tomorrow would shrink and disappear beneath the brassy glare of an unrelenting sun. But for the moment while the rain fell in floods of rushing water, the trees, the scraggly thorny shrubs, picked bare of every leaf by wandering goats and cattle, the red soil and the rocks themselves, the coolies, the *ryots*, the untouchables, the rich merchants and their wives shut away in purdah rooms, all felt a profound sense of relief and satisfaction like that of a tired and thirsty traveler drinking from a spring of fresh clear water. The travelers on the Madras-Bombay express let down windows which had been kept closed to shut out the heat and allowed the rain to dash in a fine spray through the copper screening. What had been drifts of powder-fine dust across the floors of the compartments a little while before, turned to little rivulets of sticky red mud that was like blood.

And then when the flood stopped as suddenly as it had begun,

the sun came out again and the feeling of relief was gone and in its place came a sensation of uneasiness and dread. All felt it—the coolies, the beasts, the shut-in purdah women in whose blood there flowed ten thousand years of India. Even the three European passengers on the Express grew restless and uncomfortable without knowing why. There was something unnatural about the sudden cloudburst in a season when there should have been no rain.

And the rain now seemed to have made the heat more intense. Before the rain the air had at least been dry and the perspiration evaporated and brought some relief, but now with the brassy sun striking full on the wet rocks and the bare muddy fields, the steam rose up, enveloping houses, cattle, laborers, even the moving train itself, until the whole of the vast Deccan plateau was like one gigantic Russian bath. In the train windows were closed again because the air which entered was more suffocating than the air inside. In the ditches along the tracks the flood water flowed blood red, diminishing almost as you watched it into a fine trickle, swallowed up altogether presently by the heat of the sun and the greedy thirst of the hot, red earth.

On the whole of the train there were only three westerners—a man, a boy and a woman of twenty-nine, all of them Americans. The man and the boy and a Moslem Indian child occupied a stuffy, uncomfortable second-class compartment, and one car off, the woman traveled in all the luxury which the Indian climate allowed. It was a car reserved for her alone, with extra fine copper screening to exclude the dust, with extra electric fans and a big silver basin filled with ice, replenished at every stop of the train to keep down the temperature. She had with her two bearers in the purple and gold livery of the Maharajah of Jellapore to wait upon her and serve her with fresh gin slings when she asked for them and juicy slices of pineapple cut from the heap of pineapple and melons and pomegranates which lay in the compartment at the end of the car.

She was a beautiful woman, blonde, with a fresh lovely complexion and superb figure which she made no attempt to hide from the Indian bearers who served her. She wore a dressing gown of heavy silk the color of *aubergine* with a monogram C.H. embroidered in scarlet silk, and lay on the divan, her eyes closed, her head against the pillows that were hard but comforting in the

heat. All day, since early morning, she had lain there exhausted, suffocating in the heat, opening her eyes, turning her head a little now and then to look out of the window at the burning landscape or to lift the glass, perpetually filled, which stood in the little wooden rack at her side.

Late in the afternoon when the train had passed the burning plateau of the Deccan and began to weave in among the hills and valleys leading to Poona she began to feel a little better and sat up for a time to watch the noisy clamoring crowds at the stations and the flocks of dwarf black goats that fed here and there in the scrub and raised their heads to look at the passing train and then skipped away like antelopes among the burning red rocks.

Watching them, she thought, "This is the damndest country."

And yet she liked it. Why else had she come back to it?

Underneath her, one of the wheels in the carriage began to make a clicking noise. "Click! Click! Click!" the wheel said, over and over again, "Click! Click! Click!" monotonously, irritatingly, "Click! Click! Click!" never failing, each time the wheel turned, "Click! Click! Click!" with a horrible inevitability, never once missing.

In the heat the sound took possession of her, driving out thought, its effect magnified with growing intensity, until it was like a hammer beating on bareness.

"It can't simply be a hang-over," she thought, "I never felt as bad as this before." And then after a little time during which the clicking sound took aching possession of her again, she thought, "Maybe there was something in Mrs. Goswami's story. Maybe they did get in their first licks. Maybe I did just get out in time."

Again she saw the fantastic open-air pavilion covered with bougainvillea and bignonia where the Maharajah's brother had given her a farewell party. She saw again the great pots of orchids, kicked over and shattered, one by one, by the English subalterns as a good "rag."

The whole party began to come back to her now, for the first time. Until now as the sun began to slip down the sky, she had lain there on the divan of the Jellapore royal car in a kind of coma, composed in equal parts of weariness, alcohol and discomfort. Now she saw again the dark jazz band, recruited from the

Sikh regiment, the long stairway, bordered by pots of flowers which led down to the pavilion. She saw the naked figures of the dancing boys, golden in the dim lights and beautiful in the decadent perfection, like the bodies of Krishna in the palace frescoes. She remembered crying out, "I want a dancing boy. I want to take one home with me." She remembered the scarlet coats of the subalterns and the tables filled with champagne bottles and the Maharajah's cousin dancing a rumba with one of the dancing boys, and the face of the boy, beautiful and evil, with the vice and knowledge of all time written on it. Funny how well she remembered the face. She remembered the furtive goings and comings to and from the moonlit garden outside. She remembered vaguely having fallen some time during the evening among the pots of flowers that bordered the high wide stairway.

"Yes," she thought. "They never had a party like that in New York even in the big days. I guess it must have been a real 'orgy,'" and in her thought she pronounced the g in orgy with a hard sound.

Then the clicking of the bloody wheel took possession of her again. "Click! Click! Click! Click!" It seemed louder now. She pushed the bell at her side and in a moment a dark servant in purple and gold livery came in.

"Krishna," she said, and the boy salaamed and said, "Yes, Mem-sahib."

"At the next station find the stationmaster and make him find out what is the matter with the wheel. Make him fix that noise. Do you hear it?"

The click, clack, click, clack, click, clack filled the silence between speeches and the boy said, "Yes, Memsahib, I hear it. I'll see the stationmaster." He would do what she asked. He worshiped her, she knew, not only because she was beautiful and always treated him as a friend, but because she had given him a bicycle.

Then he went away again and she fell into a half-sleep once more; in the heat, with the wheel making that damned racket, it was impossible to lose consciousness. And in her dreamy state, the memory of the party kept returning, ever more clearly. It was as if in the beauty and corruption of the night before, with all the

noise and confusion and champagne, she had been only partly conscious, as if some part of her mind had marked down things which at the time she had scarcely noticed.

She saw the pots of orchids again flying through the air from the toe of a red-coated subaltern's boot, and with her eyes closed, the beautiful depravity on the face of the naked dancing boy appeared again clearly and came very close to her. There was something vaguely frightening about it.

Then she remembered very clearly Mrs. Goswami talking with her in the arbor of bignonias. She was a dark, thin little Bengali woman, an "intellectual" very nervous and anxious, in an unbecoming pale pink sari which gave her face a bilious cast. She spoke English which was very nearly perfect.

"No, Miss Halma," she was saying earnestly, "if you take my advice you will go away immediately, at once, as His Highness suggests."

And she remembered answering a little wildly and defiantly, having had too much champagne, "Why should I go away if I don't want to? I'm having a good time. I don't want to go back to Bombay."

Then Mrs. Goswami touched her arm, a rare thing for an Indian woman to do, as she knew now in comparative soberness. Mrs. Goswami said, "I'm thinking of your own good, my friend. Those spells you had were not just ordinary illness."

That had sobered her a little and she said, "It was just the heat."

"No," said Mrs. Goswami, "I've seen it happen before. I saw a woman die once."

It came back very clearly now, even above the click-clack of the wheel. She had said to Mrs. Goswami, "Why should anyone here want to poison me?"

And Mrs. Goswami, looking about her, had answered in a whisper, "The whole *zenana*."

The statement had terrified her for a moment, not because she really believed Mrs. Goswami but because of a kind of shadow which suddenly fell over her, the shadow of all those women who were shut away inside the palace, who never went out save in motors and carriages that were thickly curtained. You never saw



them in Jellapore, yet you were always aware of their presence. She was afraid because of all the piled-up sudden memories of little things—the strange, dark servant she had found one night by accident outside the door of her rooms in the guest house, the strange man who had been near her tonight while she sat in the garden with the captain, the *ayah* who had appeared as her servant coming from nowhere but who had insisted that she had been sent to care for her and who would not go away. And there was always that feeling of being spied upon, wherever you went, whatever you did. She was very suddenly afraid of all those women—the four Maharanees, the wives of Jellapore, the sisters and aunts, the young girls who were shut away whom she had never seen and never would see. All of them, it was certain, had seen her, from the grilled windows of the *zenana* or between the curtains of a passing bullock cart or Rolls Royce.

"You must remember," said Mrs. Goswami, "that they're savage. They're not like me. I've been to Europe. Most of them can't even read or write. They think they're in the right." The dark little Bengali woman was silent for a moment, and then as if moved by a great resolution, she said, "They know even about the ring and the necklace he gave you. That is what infuriated them."

She remembered being astonished that Mrs. Goswami knew about the ring and the bracelet. But if the *zenana* knew—how could they know? And yet they did. They knew everything. It was hard to believe when you thought of Jelly himself—with his horses, gambling at Deauville or dining in Maxims or the Savoy—hard to believe that behind him here in India he had this harem filled with half-savage, vengeful women.

"You see," Mrs. Goswami said, "they would be afraid if you were the Maharajah's guest, but with his brother it's different. The brother is more popular in the *zenana* than the Maharajah himself. They're more jealous of him, and he hasn't the same power to punish them."

"I get it," she had said, "I'll think about it." And then she had thanked Mrs. Goswami and the two of them had gone back into the pavilion but not before they had seen a servant slip away from the bushes near them into the tangle of bougainvillea.

And then with the champagne and the music, the dancing and the ragging, she had forgotten the scene with Mrs. Goswami. It was odd that the rest of the evening seemed to have faded out into nothing. She could not remember now, try as she would, how she had left the party, nor how she had come to be on this train in one of the Jellapore State cars with its silver fittings and gilded elephants. She had simply wakened here in the heat with a terrible hang-over long after the train had left Jellapore. The last thing she remembered were the subalterns in the red coats kicking over the orchids in the rising light of dawn. It couldn't have been simply the champagne. She had always been famous for being able to drink any amount and still keep her head, even long ago in the beginning with Bill. No, they must have given her a Mickey Finn just to get rid of her. One of those dark, hovering figures in the pay of the *zenana* women had done it. Or perhaps it was the Maharajah's brother himself, wanting to make sure that she left Jellapore before Jelly returned.

She was tempted to laugh. "Given the bum's rush! Mebbe that's what it was! Carol Halma being given the bum's rush! That's good!"

Lazily she opened her eyes and sat up, listening. The sound of the cracked wheel went in a slower rhythm now. It was saying, "click . . . clack! click . . . clack!" more and more slowly. They were coming to a station. Thank God!

She took a drink out of the tall glass of gin and fruit juice and felt better. The hair of the dog that bit you always worked. But champagne was always bad the next day—too acid, too full of headache. She looked at her fingers suddenly. The ring was still there, it's great square, deep shimmering green pierced by the long slanting rays of the lowering sun. A thought came to her and she pushed the bell.

In a moment Krishna appeared, "Yes, Memsahib."

"Is my jewel case with the luggage?"

"Yes, Memsahib."

"Bring it to me."

The boy vanished, and gathering the dressing gown about her, she sat up, swinging her long beautiful legs over the side of the divan. Opening her bag she took out a mirror and looked at her

face. She wasn't looking her best but much better than she had expected. It was extraordinary how much she could drink without losing her looks. That, she thought, must be her Swedish blood.

With a comb, she set the blonde hair in order. It was streaked now partly by the sun and partly by need of touching up. The listlessness, the dead feeling began to leave her, and she thought, "At the next station I'll get out and stretch my legs a bit."

The train was slowing down to a stop, but outside there was still only an endless expanse of red soil and rock with here and there an isolated farmhouse with walls of red clay.

The door opened and Krishna returned carrying her jewel case. She took it from him and opened it and dismissed him. She pulled out the little trays in turn. They were all there, the bracelets, the rings, the earrings, the clips—all glittering, red, blue, green, white and platinum. The necklace was there too, the rubies glowing like blood in their heavy, rather clumsy modern Indian setting. She could change that when she was back again in Paris. Ostertag would make her a wonderful new setting. She held up the necklace, turning it this way and that so that the rubies caught the light.

"Funny," she thought, looking at it, "that he should give me that and the ring—for nothing—after I told him in the beginning there was nothing doing. . . . Unless something happened to me last night." But that she dismissed as impossible. That she couldn't have forgotten!

Putting away the jewels, she sat quite still thinking. Maybe it was just because he liked to be seen with pretty women and blonde women. Maybe he couldn't do anything. He wouldn't be the first man who had given her jewels just to be seen with her, to make the world believe he was a great and active lady-killer when really there wasn't anything doing. It sure was funny, inviting her to Jellapore and giving her jewels like this for nothing. It was different in Bombay with the rich Parsees and Khojas. They gave her jewelry too, but they wanted to marry her. They wanted all Bombay, all India to believe that they alone owned her bloneness and beauty. Well, none of them did.

The train was really stopping now. Looking out of the window

she saw the funny little Indian houses and the pretentious State buildings rising above them like pompous fat priests moving among a kneeling crowd. Quickly she opened the valise left on the divan opposite by Krishna and took out a skirt, a jacket, a blouse and a pair of shoes. Slipping off the dressing gown she stood naked, superb, for a second before slipping on the blouse and skirt. Then the shoes and the jacket and she was dressed.

The click-clack of the cracked wheel ceased and the clamor of the station platform took its place—the chatter and uproar of an India which never seems to stop traveling, the wild alarming cries of the vendors of sweetmeats and Mohammedan and Hindu drinking water, the pounding of the gong which signaled the arrival of the train, the little bird-like cries of the women greeting friends and relatives, and over it all the scent of fading garlands of jasmine and marigold looped about the scrawny necks of departing or arriving voyagers by devoted friends and relatives.

Lazily she watched the spectacle through the copper gauze that covered the windows. An enormous crowd gathered about the purple royal carriage of the State of Jellapore. They pressed close to the car fingering the gilt elephants and peacocks which adorned the exterior, pressing their noses against the copper screen to discover the identity of the august personage inside. The odor of sweat and dust and withering flowers became overwhelming. It began to fill the royal carriage itself. She rang the bell, but no Krishna was there to answer. He had gone, no doubt accompanied by his subordinate, to find the stationmaster and complain about the cracked wheel. She tried herself to pull up the shutters to shut out the peering faces which somehow made her feel naked and ashamed, but in the heat she found the effort too great and abandoned the idea. She succeeded only in breaking one beautifully lacquered nail and said, "God-damn it!"

She would go outside on the platform. Anything was better than this goldfish existence. They might follow her about, staring at her milky skin and her bloneness, but she was used to that by now. She took up the topee that hung above the divan and at the same time, an uproar began among the crowd. They pushed and groaned and cried out and protested in Hindustani and Mahratta. Behind them appeared two tough little Mahratta policemen, lay-

ing out right and left with their *lathis*, shouting in guttural Mah-ratta. Suddenly the space beside the royal carriage was free, and in peace she sat down and lighted a cigarette and took another swig of the gin sling.

There was nothing to do but wait. If only the damned thing would arrive in Bombay so she could go to the Taj Mahal Hotel and have a bath and come down to the bar and see who was in town. She was feeling much better now; all the old vitality was surging back and with it an old impatience and restlessness which attacked her on long journeys. If only Indian trains didn't spend twenty minutes or half an hour in every station.

From beneath the car there came presently the sound of hammering. That would be the men examining the wheel. She hoped to God they could fix it. If that click-clacking kept on all the way to Bombay, she'd go crazy.

After a time the noise ceased. The crowd outside had retired now to a decent distance behind the two policemen. They still chattered and peered but they couldn't look in. Every time one of them was thrust forward between the policemen he was whacked over the shoulders with a *lathi*.

As the train drew into the station, the man in the second class compartment stirred and looked out of the window. He saw the station sign LEPTA and the sign just beneath *Junction for Ranchipur*. All the hubbub, all the shouting, all the confusion on the platform was nothing new to him, and after a single glance he turned to the small boy who sat turning the pages of an English child's story magazine.

"D'you want to get out and stretch your legs, Tom?"

"Sure, Dad."

The boy who was a little over nine jumped down from his seat, and said, "Give me eight annas for some oranges," and his father reached up to the pocket of the white jacket that hung by the divan, took out a rupee and gave it to him.

"Don't get lost and don't miss the train."

"No, of course I won't."

The father was a man of about thirty-four or five with a wide high forehead, blue eyes and a mouth which could have been

sensual save for the lines at the corners, lines which only come with years of self-denial. Yet there were lines of good humor in the face as well; it was not a forbidding face, nor the face of a disagreeable ascetic. There was too much humor in the blue eyes and too much sadness. It was a kindly face illumined by good humor. The lines, the set of the jaw and the firmness of the chin all gave it character.

In the heat he wore only a sarong, a habit he had picked up at the Malay states, and was naked from the waist up. It was a muscular body, a little too thin, but beautiful in its proportions, not tanned, but the ivory color of the body of a man who has long lived in the tropics. He lighted a cigarette and looked again out of the window at his son.

The boy was bargaining with a vendor of oranges, and enjoying the bargaining. The orange vendor said something violent in Hindustani and turned to go away. The boy stood his ground and waited and the vendor, after two or three steps, turned back. Then the boy said something in Hindustani and the vendor, a black, skinny man in a soiled white *dhoti*, threw up his arms and repeated the pantomime. Again the boy held his ground and this time he won out. The vendor in despair, gave him ten oranges and accepted the coin. The boy couldn't have given him the rupee because there wasn't any change and ten oranges on a station platform in the Deccan couldn't cost a rupee.

The father watching, grinned. His son hadn't been born and lived in the Orient for nothing. He had learned about bargaining. Maybe that would help him later on in the West where the bargaining was different but none the less vicious—not as straightforward or as amusing as the bargaining of the East.

The man thought, "I'll have him for another thirty-six hours and then I won't see him again for five years." The thought made him feel a little sick and he turned away, without thinking, to the Indian boy with the bandaged eyes who still sat cross-legged and very still on the divan opposite.

"Ali," he asked in Hindustani, "do you want to go out on the platform with Tom?"

The boy turned his head in the direction of the voice, "No, Sahib Buck, I couldn't see anything."

"Tom's gone for oranges. Do you want one?"

"Yes, Sahib Buck." Then he turned away his head a little and sat with it bent forward. He was listening. Merrill watched him, thinking, "He never had a chance at anything."

The boy was the son of a widow of a mahout and had grown up in the gutter of Jellapore City outside the elephant compound. Merrill had managed to keep him away from the missionaries. There wasn't anything for him to gain from Christianity. No Moslem ever had gained anything from it. A Hindu was different. Being converted could help them, socially and economically if not spiritually. He had had to unlearn a lot of things here in India in the villages. You didn't know India unless you knew the villages. That's where you got inside. . . .

The Indian boy suddenly spoke. "It's funny, Sahib, how you can see with your ears."

"Yes," said Merrill, watching the boy.

"Yes, I can see everything on the platform just by listening to the sounds."

Merrill didn't answer and presently the boy asked, "Do you think I'll ever get over being blind?"

"I should think so, Ali. The Doctor Sahib in Bombay is a great man. It's luck he's here. He comes from far away across the great black water."

The boy's head moved a little from side to side. "I'd like to see again because I want to be a mahout. I want to drive the Maharajah's elephant—his own great elephant Akbar. Hindus don't understand elephants. That's why all good mahouts are Moslems."

There wasn't any use kidding the boy into believing he would see if Colonel Moti's friend found there was nothing he could do. It would only be cruel in the end.

The door of the compartment opened and Merrill's son came in. He was holding the rupee in his hand. "I got ten oranges for four annas," he said.

"Give a couple to Ali," he said.

The American boy put two oranges in the empty, still hands of the blind Indian boy. "Can you peel them?" he asked.

"Yes," said Ali.

"I'll write to you when I get to America," said Tom. "I'll write to Dad and he can read it to you. It'll be exciting, I guess."

"Funny," thought Merrill, "wonder what he'll think of his own country." And again the sick feeling came to the pit of his stomach. It wasn't going to be easy giving up seeing the boy for five years . . . five years from nine to fourteen.

He looked at his watch and saw that the train had been in the station for more than half an hour. Twenty minutes was the usual time. He looked out of the window and saw that the crowd on the platform had gathered in a silence so unnatural for an Indian railway platform that he knew something of an extraordinary interest was taking place. They stood gaping and peering, and in the unnatural silence he heard two or three voices rising in a wild argument.

"Misery and desolation, Memsahib. There is nothing to do," said a vaguely familiar voice in Hindustani. That, he thought, would be the voice of Krishna, the head boy. There was a woman's voice—the gawdy woman's voice—saying something, and the voice of the stationmaster, in a sing-song Eurasian English. "The axle is cracked, my lady. It is unsafe for yourself more than for the others."

He thought, "Good Lord, that means she'll have to come in here." He was alarmed suddenly. What would he talk to her about? What would he say to the gawdy lady all the way to Bombay? He'd never known a woman like her. In the Biblical sense, he'd never known any woman but his dead wife. He sat up suddenly on the divan. The voices outside still went on, arguing interminably, but he didn't hear them. He was scared now. Standing up, he pulled on a cheap shirt of white silk, slipped off the sarong and drew on a pair of white shorts, stockings and a pair of shoes, terrified suddenly at the thought that she might have come into the compartment without warning to find them all half-naked in the heat.

His son looked up from the orange he was patiently dissecting and asked, "What are you putting on your clothes for, Dad?"

"Maybe we're being joined by a lady."

"Oh . . . that pretty lady in the Maharajah's carriage?"

"Yes."



"Oh," said the boy and went back to dividing his orange into neat segments.

There was nothing to be done. Her common sense told her that. You couldn't go on traveling in the car of a fast express with a broken axle. Krishna just kept murmuring "misery and desolation" and saying it wasn't his fault, but that didn't solve anything.

To the groveling, disgruntled stationmaster, she said, "Where am I going to go?"

"There's two purdah carriages, me lady."

"Empty?"

"No. There is two ladies in one and three in the other."

No, that was impossible. She couldn't spend the rest of the hot journey to Bombay shut up in a stuffy purdah carriage being stared at by a couple of women who had never been out of a harem. They would disapprove of her. They'd do worse, which was simply to sit and stare with enormous black eyes; and the compartment would be airless and hot and reeking with the sickly smell of musk and fading jasmine. The women, who had never been out of seclusion, had no manners at all. They'd simply stare and speculate in their cowlike way about what she was like and what kind of world she had come out of. They would stare for five hours . . . hour after hour, minute after minute.

A feeling of wild exasperation came over her. It was always like this in India. Just when you were beginning to enjoy yourself, the *zenana* women gave you a Mickey Finn or the train broke down or you got cholera. . . . The old complaint of Westerners attacked her. Why had she come back to India, anyway? When you were back again in the West it all seemed wonderful and romantic, and as soon as you returned the mirage was shattered by a million annoyances. It was the God-damndest country.

"Krishna," she said, "get all the baggage out on the platform and then go and . . . never mind. Just get the baggage out on the platform."

"Very good, Memsahib."

She had meant to order him to go and ask the strange man in the second-class compartment if she could share his compartment

for the rest of the journey to Bombay and then in the middle of a sentence thought better of it. The man could refuse Krishna, but he couldn't refuse her under the circumstances. One thing encouraged her. The glimpse she had caught of her fellow traveler in the morning just after she had wakened. She had noticed a white man in a sarong and jacket talking to the stationmaster. She did not know what he looked like; she had been too drowsy and too ill to notice him very carefully. She only knew that he couldn't be the conventional English official. That sort of man would have been dressed in white drill and a topee, sitting bolt upright in the heat through the whole trip to Bombay. To that sort of man she might have preferred even the horrors of the purdah carriage. The man in the second-class compartment was, by British official standards, definitely nuts, or he wouldn't be dressed as he was, comfortably and sensibly for the heat. And she had always felt more at home with people who were a little crazy.

To the stationmaster she said, "How long is it going to be before we can go on?"

"Half an hour, me lady. We have to leave the carriage here."

She didn't answer him, but she was annoyed. She wanted to be in Bombay by eight o'clock in order to have a bath and change and come down to see who was in the bar of the Taj Mahal and find out which days there was racing, and pick up all the threads of that complicated unreal life where she had dropped them on going to Jellapore. Now, they wouldn't get there until nine or nine-thirty and everything was upset. She would have to miss the cock-tail hour and dine late and alone. "Damn India," she said aloud and began to gather up her bag, her white felt hat, and her gloves. For a moment she thought, "Maybe I'd better put on some stockings." And then she rejected the idea. If the strange man wore a sarong he wouldn't mind her appearing stockingless.

Turning to the ostentatiously busy Krishna, she said, "Don't forget the gin and limes."

"No, Memsahib."

Then she did over her face and hair and set out for the second-class compartment and the stranger.

As she appeared on the platform of the railway carriage, a murmur, a kind of subdued "Ah . . . h . . . h" arose from the

crowd of Indians held back by the policemen. To them this sight of this tall, blonde woman was better than a circus to the citizens of a small town in the Middle West. At this obscure railway junction they had seen European women before, all of them, but never one like this one. Most of the women they had seen were of an uncertain age, dressed indifferently in dowdy clothes, withered and drained of youth and beauty and vitality by the cruelty of the Indian climate. This apparition on the platform was, in the heat and dust, golden and pink and white, with a body which underneath the thin white silk showed all the magnificence of her belly, buttocks and thighs. And she walked with grace and insolence like some animal goddess, with that slow measured tread learned years before on the stage of the New Amsterdam theatre. It was Freya appearing suddenly before the devotees of the dark Sita and the Evil Kali. Even though it was a slightly faded and hung-over Freya the effect of the bloneness and the voluptuous body was tremendous.

As she descended the steps and moved toward the second-class carriage with a gait which was like the low warm swells of the Persian Gulf—a gait which was calculated to arouse the weary lust of tired business men in far-off Manhattan—the crowd broke through the barrier of policemen, oblivious to kicks and blows of the *lathi*. They pressed closely around her, smelling of dust and oil and sweat, blocking her way until the tough little policemen clubbed open a pathway once more. Alarmed and a little disheveled, she managed, with the policemen at her back, to make the steps of the second-class carriage. She was less alarmed than she might have been, for she was used to such demonstrations. Wherever she went on foot, in the markets or the bazaars, a crowd collected and followed her, like small dark insects attracted to a light.

In the second-class compartment, Merrill had busied himself, like a housewife expecting a suddenly announced visit, putting the place in order. Even in the steaming heat, he experienced a sudden return of energy. The old indifference, born of long bouts of malaria which made even dressing seem a tremendous effort, appeared to have left him. Partly, the reason was good manners.

Because he had been well brought up long ago in the family of a clergyman in a small upper New York State valley, remote instinct told him that the house should look nice. But there was too another element—the faint knowledge, scarcely recognized, that the woman who was coming to join him came out of another world, a world of which he did not know and never had known anything at all, a world in which there were such things as luxury and utter freedom, license and drinking and wholesale fornication.

For he knew about this woman. Like every one of the six million residents of the State of Jellapore he knew of her presence in Jellapore City. The State officers, the *zenana*, the nobles, the rich merchants, the missionaries knew of it, but so too did the poor coolies and the *ryots* and their families. Even the shy, unseen aboriginal tribes in the mountain jungles had received vague intimations, already translated into legend, concerning a blonde goddess who had come to stay with the brother of the Maharajah. Lost among the remote villages, Merrill possessed information concerning the goddess which was scarcely more exact than that of the aborigines. And now suddenly this almost legendary creature, whom he had never expected to see, was projected suddenly into his life.

So, in a way, without his being aware of it, he prepared for the arrival of the strange woman as if he too were preparing to receive a goddess.

Her arrival was preceded by a murmur of the crowd on the platform and punctuated by the shouts and cursing of the policemen and the groans of those struck on the head or shoulders by blows of their *lathis*. Then there was a sudden silence as Merrill kicked the last of a pile of pineapples beneath the divan, and he looked up to find her standing there in the doorway of the compartment.

She was holding a jewel case and said, "Excuse me for barging in like this but my railway carriage has broken down and there's no place for me to go."

The words were English words rather than American, but the accent held an echo which came unmistakably from the Mississippi Basin. Out of his long experience with languages and dialects he had come to have a sharp ear for such things. The way she said "barging" with a broad r, brought him a sense of relief and dis-

sipated a little the first frantic shyness which had attacked him at sight of her.

Tommy started up at sight of her and the blind Ali turned his head toward the sound of her voice. Merrill said, "Come in. I heard the row outside and thought you might be turning up here. Come in and make yourself at home. Better sit on this side. The boys have taken up that side of the carriage, and boys of that age are a little messy."

She sat down almost shyly on the edge of the divan, holding the jewel case awkwardly in her lap. He was aware suddenly not only that she too felt shy, but of the perfection of the body, now concealed, now exposed, beneath the white silk. She should have put on more clothes at least before walking along the platform in front of all that peering, lecherous mob. It wasn't safe for her and it wasn't fair to the crowd itself.

"I couldn't face the purdah carriage. You know what they're like?"

"Yes, I know."

The train suddenly jolted and began to move. She was alarmed. "The train's not leaving, is it? All my baggage is in the other car."

"No. They'll be taking off the car, that's all."

"Everything I've got with me is in there."

"You've got a bearer, haven't you?"

"Yes. Two of 'em."

The train jolted again and came to a stop.

"I'll take a look just to make sure."

"That's very good of you."

He went to the platform and leaning out saw that the train had moved backward a couple of hundred yards to a switch. Heads were poked out of every window, the length of the train, watching the operation. Voices shouted back and forth between carriages. With the patience and the good humor of the Indians, the accident had changed from what in the West would have been an annoyance into a hilarious party. Far down the platform he saw the figure of a Jellapore royal servant in purple and gold. He was standing beside an immense pile of luggage. Merrill thought, "All that can't belong to her." And then he decided to remain in the doorway until everything was settled. He didn't want to go back

into the carriage with her now; he was not quite certain why, but he wanted to stay outside as long as possible.

Inside the carriage Tommy looked at the pretty lady and said, "What have you got in that box?"

She answered him at once. "A lot of pretty things. Would you like to see them?"

"Yes," said Tommy, coming over to her. "Let me look."

She opened the jewel case and the boy stood, looking down at it, his head bent a little on one side. Then one by one, out of each tray she lifted the jewels and laid them on the divan beside her—the necklace, the bracelets, the clips and the earrings—and the two of them, the Follies girl and the small boy, studied them. In the eyes of both of them was the same look, the expression of wonder and admiration in the poor for the mystery of small objects of beauty and immense value.

"Pretty, aren't they?" asked Carol.

The boy, his eyes shining, looked up at her. "Can I touch them?"

"Sure."

One by one he began picking them up. "Wheel! They're like the Maharajah's. What are these?"

"Emeralds," said Carol, "and these are diamonds and the necklace is made of rubies."

"Could I let Ali touch them?"

"Yes."

She watched the boy take the jewels one by one and hand them to the blind boy. She watched the long sensitive thin Indian fingers feel and caress each one. The two boys, the son of the Moham-medan mahout and the son of the social worker, talked together in Hindustani. Then the American boy turned to her and said, "Ali wants to know if you're a queen."

At that the girl laughed, "No, not that kind of a queen anyway. Lots of women in America have jewelry like that."

The big blue eyes of the boy were still wide with wonder. "They're beautiful," he said.

"Haven't you ever been to America?" she asked.

"No, but I'm going to America to school. I'm sailing on a big boat in a couple of days with Mr. Snodgrass, the head of the Mis-

sion in Jellapore. I'm going to live in Minnesota with my uncle. Have you ever been to Minnesota?"

She laughed, "Sure I have. I was born there."

"Was your father a missionary?"

"No, he was a farmer."

"Gee. That must be fun living on a farm in America. I read a book about that. It's not like a farm in India, is it?"

"No, not much."

"Gee, it must be fun. I wish my uncle lived on a farm. He only lives in a city called Minni . . ." He couldn't quite say it, so she said it for him. "Minneapolis—it's an Indian name."

"Red Indian?"

"Yes."

"Yes, I read about them too in a book. Are there cowboys in Minnesota?"

Again she laughed, "I'm afraid not. But maybe your uncle will take you west to see cowboys."

"Gee, I'd like to be a cowboy. It must be fun."

The dark fingers of the Indian boy continued to caress the jewels. It was as if his hands took the place of his eyes, as if all his soul were concentrated in the tips of the slim fingers. She thought suddenly, "Orientals must feel differently about jewels. To us they're just something you wear and show off and have to get insured." To the fingers of the mahout's blind son, the jewels seemed to have life and soul. He stroked and caressed them as a child caresses a kitten.

Then the Indian boy said something to the other boy and the small American asked, "Ali wants to know if you're the daughter of a queen."

"No, my mother came from Sweden."

"Is that a nice country?"

"I don't know. I've never been there. I was born in Minnesota."

Again the blind boy spoke and again the tow-headed son of the missionary turned to her. This time he hesitated. "Ali is not very polite."

"What did he ask you?" And when the boy hesitated, she said, "Don't be afraid."

He said, "Did you steal them?" Quickly he added, "You mustn't mind that. You see Indians are kind of different from us."

She laughed, "No, I don't mind. You see, I had a rich husband. He gave me some of them and friends gave me the rest."

"Where is your husband now?"

"We're divorced."

"What does that mean?"

"It means that we don't like each other so we're not married any more."

"Oh." He was thoughtful for a time. Then he said, "Can you do that in America?"

"Yes. They do it quite often."

Again for a time he was thoughtful, fingering one of the earrings, but clearly his attention was not on it. At last in a small voice he said, "Maybe that's a good idea . . . if people don't like each other."

The observation interested her. She asked, "Why do you say that?"

"I don't know. I was just thinking."

Then a voice interrupted them both, a voice which said, "You'd better give those things back, Tommy, before you lose them—and I wouldn't ask so many questions."

She turned and saw the father standing in the doorway. How long he had been standing there she did not know, but she wondered quietly how much of the conversation he had overheard, and suddenly, for the first time, she found herself blushing. Wildly, she tried to control the blush, but even in the heat she felt the warmth in her face. Why she blushed she could not think, save that the things she had said to the child she realized swiftly would sound quite differently to a grown man, even to a missionary.

The father was smiling at her and saying, "You mustn't mind Tommy. In some ways he's half-savage from our point of view. He's been brought up among Tamil kids and in the elephant stables." She noticed for the first time the extraordinary blueness of the father's eyes and the tired lines about the lean mouth. She had scarcely noticed him before. Suddenly she saw he was handsome. More than that, more important than that, he was likable and sympathetic. All her life she had lived by instinct. Of preju-



dices she had few, if any. Reason did not cause her to stumble nor intellect to confuse an issue. This man she liked because her instinct told her there was a rare quality about him. In her lazy thoughts she gave to simplicity and goodness the label "being on the level."

The boy was collecting the jewels from Ali and giving them back to her. Clumsily, hurriedly, she put them back into the jewel case, willy-nilly, dumping them into the wrong trays, jamming the drawers in her haste when she tried to close them. She was aware of only one impulse, to get the jewels back into the case and put it out of sight. Because she was ashamed. Why she did not know, but it had something to do with the purity of the clear blue eyes. They made the jewels seem obscene.

Looking down at the box she said, "I thought they would amuse the kids."

The man grinned. "Pretty expensive toys." And she looked up at him wondering if what he had said was meant to be a crack. It wasn't. She could see by the expression in his face that it was made innocently, sincerely. She divined at the same instant that he wasn't the kind of man who made cracks. She was aware suddenly that there was a kind of innocence about him.

Something about him made her feel ill at ease and she thought, quickly. "I'm going to hate the rest of this trip. God-damn that axle! God-damn India!"

Then she heard the voice of Krishna and saw him standing there in his purple and gold. He asked, "Is there anything I can do for the Memsahib?" And she felt a sudden defiance and heard herself saying, "Bring me a gin sling." And to the man she said, "Won't you have something?"

He turned to Krishna, "Have you a gin and tonic, Krishna?"

"Yes, Sahib Merrill."

He went away and she asked, "Do you know Krishna?"

He grinned, "Yes, I know about everybody in Jellapore."

That too made her uneasy. She wished suddenly that after all she had gone in the purdah compartment. Even the staring eyes of all those Indian woman would have been better than this. It was too late to change now for the train had begun to move, on its

way to Bombay, leaving behind at Lepta the gaudy broken carriage of the Maharajah of Jellapore.

"Well, anyway," she thought angrily, "it's only for four or five more hours. After that I'll never see him again."

The heat was a little better now, although the sides of the railway carriage were still hot to the touch. Krishna brought the drinks and she drank the gin sling quickly in two or three gulps. The boy watched her with round eyes filled with curiosity. The headache was a little better now and she thought, "I've certainly made a big jump from the party last night. Me, traveling with missionaries."

It made her want to laugh—to think of the subalterns kicking over the pots of orchids and she thought, "Anyway, I don't see anything to be sore about. He hasn't said or done anything." But she ordered Krishna to bring her another gin sling, just so the missionary guy wouldn't make any mistake about what kind of a girl she was. But almost at once as she turned and saw again the honest blue eyes, she said, "It's been so hot all day. I just can't seem to get enough to drink."

Minute by minute, hour by hour, the train descended from the high burnt red plateau of the Deccan down through valleys and over passes, stopping now and then at clamorous stations; and in the second-class carriage the four passengers dozed or talked or stared out through the fine copper screening, meant to exclude dust which came through it like talc, settling over everything, piling up in little drifts on the floor, filling teeth and hair, and soiling the white clothing of Miss Carol Halma and Homer Merrill.

Outside the window the scenery grew less monotonous and more beautiful, the flat country breaking away into gorges and ravines where underground moisture fed the vegetation and tall lean betel palms leaned over tanks of water surrounded in the evening light by bathing holy men and *dhobis* and women in bright colored saris who had come in the cool of the day to do their washing. Sometimes a troupe of big gray, black-faced monkeys scuttled across the level ground and disappeared chattering into the mango trees. The best mangoes in the world came from this part of India.

Presently the blind son of the mahout lay on his sides with his

knees drawn up and fell asleep and the American boy in a little while lay down beside him and slept too. Outside, as if a curtain had fallen suddenly, the last rays of the sun vanished and the man and woman were left alone shut into the compartment together, the woman already a little drunk and the man tired and a little puzzled and uneasy. Both of them felt the aloneness; even through the haze of drink, the woman was aware of it. To the man it was painful.

She said suddenly, "You ought to drink more. It would cheer you up."

"I can't drink. I've been ill . . . a little gin and tonic . . . that helps keep off the return of malaria." He grinned, "But you have to think of the liver. The liver makes a lot of trouble out here. I'm caught between liver and malaria."

"I guess I haven't got a liver. Nobody's ever mentioned it." The train passed through a crossroad station without stopping and both of them turned to look out of the window. Then she said with a kind of tipsy elegance, "I don't want to intrude, but what was your illness?"

"The usual thing . . . malaria, liver, nerves . . . the old Indian disease." It was a lot more than that, but he didn't tell her. He could not have told anyone, because even when he thought of the last year he felt ill again and choked as if a lump had come in his throat to stifle his breathing. It was odd that in spite of everything he could do, the nerves of his whole body seemed to tighten. It was as if every nerve was an electric wire that was suddenly charged with current. He could feel the nerves in his legs, his arms, across his abdomen, through the muscles on his chest.

"I guess I've never been in India long enough," she said. "But I know what it means when India gets on your nerves. It was like that with me in Jellapore. I guess I got away just in time."

"Ever been here before?"

"Yes, I came here on my honeymoon."

"Is your husband with you on this trip?" He hoped she had a husband. It would somehow make him feel less strange. He liked her but he hated to think of her wandering about alone, visiting Maharajahs and doing things like that. In his heart he could only feel that it meant what he did not want to believe.

"No, he's not." Then the drink made her reckless and she thought, "What the hell! Even if he is a missionary, he can take it." And aloud she said, "You see, I'm divorced."

The expression on his face did not change and suddenly she wanted to justify herself. "You see, it was hardly a marriage really. I was young and so was he. He didn't have much sense and his family didn't like it. Neither of us tried to make much of a go of it."

"I see," said Merrill, gravely. "That happens sometimes."

The old regret attacked her. She called to Krishna and asked for another gin sling, and the man said, "Do you think you'll be all right if you have another?"

For a second she was angry. Then she said, "Don't worry about me. I've been at it for years. I'm a Swede. I know my capacity."

The man was silent. Krishna, with a dead face, brought the drink. She laughed and said, "I'm all right, aren't I, Krishna?"

"Yes, Memsahib."

"Krishna has seen me drink the Yuvarajah right under the table and all the others too."

"Indians can't drink," observed the man. "It's not in their blood."

"No, but Swedes can. They've been drinking hard liquor for thousands of years. Here's how. Sorry you won't join me."

She was feeling good now. Gay again. The headache was gone and with it that depression which always settled on her the moment she stopped drinking—and all the fears which sometimes attacked her, fear of losing her youth and her looks, terror of what was to become of her, and worst of all, the strange nameless terror of being lost. It was as if she were wandering in a desert or a forest, not knowing where she had come from or whither she was bound or why she was there at all. It was a sickening fear from which she always turned away.

She began presently to go to pieces. Carelessly, gayly she pushed back the light silk jacket, unaware, or at least heedless, of the fact that under the dim light she appeared half-naked. Her hair was in disorder and her cheeks a little flushed, but the disorder instead of making her appear sordid, only gave her the wild, charming look of a Bacchante.

Boldly she said, "What does it feel like to be a missionary?"

"I'm not a missionary really. I work in the villages."

"What kind of work?"

He grinned, thinking that it was a little futile to explain his work to her. "Well, I go among the farmers and villagers and teach them how to market their crops and improve the breed of their chickens and cattle and what to eat and how to avoid hookworm."

"Don't they mind your butting in?"

"Sometimes the Brahmins do," he grinned. "But the villagers don't . . . they're glad to have somebody help them. Nobody has paid much attention to them for about ten thousand years—except to collect taxes."

"And you don't try to convert them or talk about God or anything?"

"No, I'm just practical."

"D'you get a lot of money for it?"

"No, enough to live on."

"Well, I must say, it's a funny thing to want to do."

"I guess maybe it is . . . but I enjoy it."

She lifted the glass and drained the last drop. "Well, I always say, that's the thing that matters—that you like doing what you're doing."

Then suddenly a meaningless, unreasonable, aching silence separated them, as if everything which she was and all that he was had marshaled their forces and withdrawn into corners, facing each other, watchful and hostile. And with him, there was always his nerves and the particular nervousness of not knowing how to behave with women like this. The more she drank, the more changed she became, the more he was troubled. He looked away from her out of the window and closed his eyes. The long glare of the day had brought back the pain in the top of his head. With his eyes closed he could not see her lying back on the divan among the pillows. Yet when he closed his eyes the image of her was still there, the body only partly concealed by white silk, the gold-streaked hair, tousled and curly above the lovely friendly face and blue eyes.

Then he heard her voice asking, "Are you tired?"

"Yes."

"Is there anything I can do to help?" As he opened his eyes he

saw her rising from the divan. "Come and lie down here. I'll sit in the chair. I'm feeling fine. Anyway, it was lousy of me to barge in here and take your place."

"No, I'm all right."

Through the mist of her tipsiness she saw how pale he was, how ill he looked. She said, "Don't be a damned fool. Get up and lie down on the divan."

"No. . . . I'm all right. It's nothing but a headache."

She was beside the armchair now, bending over him, tipsily insistent. "I'm nothing but a sow, I guess. Listen to me. Get up and go over there and lie down on the divan."

"No."

"Well, I'll stand up here in the corner until you do. And I mean it too . . . all the rest of the way to Bombay. Do as I tell you."

The pain grew thicker. It seemed to spread, pushing against the back of his eyes and the base of his skull. He didn't answer her because at the moment the effort was beyond his strength. She bent down and attempted to lift him to his feet, very nearly succeeding. It was astonishing how strong she was.

"Come on," she said, "help me."

Then he obeyed her, partly because he was suffering too much to do otherwise and partly because it was so pleasant to have someone caring for him. That was something he had never had from a woman since his mother died when he was ten in the parish house in a far-away New York State village.

With her help he managed to get as far as the divan and lie down. Weakly he said, "It'll go away after a little while. It never lasts."

"What do you do for it?"

"Nothing. There isn't anything to be done." And in spite of anything he could do his face grew white and contracted with pain.

She left him for a moment, passing the sleeping boys and opened the door at the end of the compartment. "Krishna!"

"Yes, Memsahib?"

"Make me a gimlet,—straight gin and lime juice—I can't drink any more water."

Then she returned again to the divan, where Merrill lay with his head pressed against the hard cushion at the end. His whole

body was rigid with pain. All his strength was concentrated in pressing the top of his head against the hard surface. That alone seemed to bring relief. For a moment she stood watching him, a little terrified. She had never known either illness or pain and the sight of so much concentrated agony bewildered her.

"There must be something a person can do," she thought, and aloud she asked: "Haven't you any dope? Haven't you got anything that would help?"

"No."

"That's foolish." Perhaps he thought you oughtn't to take stuff like that. There were nutty people who held such beliefs.

Then, as if she were unable to endure the sight any longer, she sat on the edge of the divan and shyly she put out one hand and began stroking, slowly and firmly, the back of his neck. . . . She did it instinctively but at the same time in her memory there came up the picture of her mother doing the same thing to her father, a little while before he died. He had had a tumor on the brain and the touch of her mother's hand firmly stroking his head had been the only thing which brought relief. She had left the show and gone back to Minnesota to be there when her father died from the terrible pain, and now in the railway carriage, sliding down the mountains into Bombay, she saw again the bedroom in Minnesota with its heavy furniture and the oil lamp beside her parents' great double bed and the Biblical texts in Swedish wreathed with garlands of flowers which hung against the ornate wallpaper. Was that what this man had? Was he going to die as her father had? He was too young and too good-looking and too nice.

Krishna brought the gimlet—a big one made of pure gin and lime juice and sugar with no water in it. She drank it down in a single swallow and suddenly she felt bolder and experienced a kind of tenderness for the suffering man. The stroking seemed to bring him relief. The muscular body, a moment before as taut as a tightly drawn wire, began slowly to relax.

Presently she asked, "Is it better?"

"Yes, much better."

The train stopped again. The stationmaster beat on the clanging railway iron. The crowd yelled and chattered. The vendors of water raised their harsh voices and at the sounds the man's body

stiffened once more with the agony of all that raucous uproar hammering on his tired brain.

An hour or two from Bombay the pain left him altogether, and he sat up on the edge of the divan, white and trembling, his face damp with perspiration, suddenly old and tired. He looked at her and smiled.

"Sorry. I must have been an awful nuisance," he said.

"It wasn't anything. I hope you didn't mind my treatment."

Again he grinned, "No, it was very pleasant. I'm very grateful. It goes away like that—suddenly."

"Now what you need is a drink. . . . Krishna! . . ." She clapped her hands, and at the sound the blind boy on the divan stirred in his sleep.

Krishna appeared and left again to fetch the drink.

Then she said, "Is that boy blind for always?"

He looked up at her and then at the boy and an odd look of tenderness came into his face, a look that she was unaccustomed to seeing in the faces of men she knew.

"I'm afraid so," he answered. "I'm taking him up to Bombay for an operation. There's a surgeon . . . a very famous one . . . in Bombay for a couple of weeks. He's visiting a friend of mine . . . an Indian. It was a piece of luck. I was bringing my own boy up to send him to America, so I brought Ali along. . . . There's about one chance in ten that he'll get his sight back. He wants it so much because he's got an ambition to drive the great elephant of the Maharajah when he grows up."

She had a sudden picture of Jelly—the king of kings, the father and mother of his people . . . in a checked suit at the races. Funny that this blind boy should want to drive his elephant, when Jelly never thought of his people. Jelly wouldn't have bothered to do anything for the boy; he'd only send him away because the sight of the boy would cause him pain and annoyance. Jelly would just turn away and order another bottle of champagne.

She raised her glass. She wasn't feeling giddy and excited now. She said, "Here's to Ali getting back his sight."

"That's a good thing to drink to."

Suddenly she felt very intimate and friendly with the man, as if



they had been through a great many things together. She lay back in the armchair and closed her eyes, aware again of the heat and the jolting of the train. She kept thinking, "I mustn't let it die on me now. I want some fun when I get to the Taj Mahal bar."

The train was two hours late by the time the first lights and smells of Bombay came into sight and hearing, lights already obscured by the low-hanging haze of cow dung smoke, and smells that seemed doubly strong and pungent in the heat which hung like a blanket over the low-lying city. She was feeling gay again and the familiar smell excited her. In a few minutes, in less than an hour, she would be back again where there were lights and dancing and people. The gin made her feel the old confidence. She would meet people—probably men she knew—in the vast bar of the Taj Mahal, and if there was no one there she could, she knew, easily strike up an acquaintance with a stranger and find herself a new circle of friends. Thank heaven she was friendly and that she could take care of herself. You were always hearing of girls led astray or deceived or swindled. Suddenly she laughed aloud. They must be bloody fools. Nothing had ever happened to her that she didn't want to happen.

She tried to rise and go into the washroom to powder her face and put her hair in order, but she felt suddenly dizzy and sat down again. "I can do that," she thought, "when I get to the hotel. Am I going to have a good time!"

The long journey across the burning, dusty plateau became suddenly a kind of nightmare, possessed only of the reality of dreams. It seemed now to belong to the remote past. Only the future existed. In her health and vitality, the aura of past experiences, however bad, never clung to her. The past had the power to depress you only if you were ill or tired. Hope, optimism, anticipation she knew, out of experience and instinct, were the rewards of health and vitality.

Her companion roused the blind boy and his son and told them to put themselves in order for the arrival. The blind boy asked him something in Hindustani; and when the man replied the boy grew suddenly agitated. He talked rapidly, wildly. She could under-

stand not a word of the conversation, but she divined that the man was trying to calm the boy and explain something to him.

The discussion went on for a long time while the American boy disappeared into the lavatory. At last the blind boy seemed calmer, and the man said to her, "He slept through sundown without praying and he's frightened. I tried to tell him that God wouldn't mind. Even Allah couldn't be as tough as that—to hold that against him."

She laughed with unnatural loudness. "Some of them have the damndest ideas."

Then the man led the blind boy to the washroom and as they returned the train began to slow down for the station. She called Krishna and said, "You come to the hotel with me in the taxi. Let the other boy come behind us with the luggage. Bring the two small valises. I'll keep the jewel box."

"Very good, Memsahib." It was a task Krishna had had before—this guarding Memsahib and all her luggage, seeing that she got safely to her hotel.

To her traveling companion she said, "Well, I hope we'll meet again some time." But she said it without sincerity. At the moment she was scarcely thinking of him. She thought, "A nice enough guy, but just a missionary." She pulled on her hat and added, opening her bag, "Here's my card. I'll be at the Taj Mahal Hotel. I can never thank you enough."

Taking the card, he said, "It wasn't anything. I haven't got a card but my name is Merrill—Homer Merrill." (At the name Homer, she wanted to laugh. That was what Bill used to call a "barber shop name"—Homer, Ernest, Floyd, Leo, Albert, Clarence . . . he had a whole list of them.)

"I'm staying with a friend—Colonel Moti—you won't remember his name but he's a doctor and head of the Institute of Tropical Diseases. . . ." And then almost shyly he added, "In case you should want to reach me for anything I know Bombay pretty well."

The train had nearly stopped. She said, "I do too . . . very well." And hazily, she thought, "And how! But not the missionary's Bombay, old boy." (In half an hour she'd be in the bar and wouldn't have to worry about feeling tired or fussing about the future.)

Then the train stopped abruptly, in the way of Indian trains, nearly throwing them all to the floor. The din began outside and into the compartment came a small and handsome Indian, rather swarthy. At sight of him she thought, "That's the handsomest Indian I ever saw."

The impression came instantaneously. He was finely made like a steel spring, and wore Indian dress, white jodhpurs and black *atchkan* with a *puggree* of scarlet. When he looked at her she felt suddenly sobered and uncomfortable. It was the eyes which gave her the impression of his beauty. They were large and intensely black with a kind of fire behind them, not the eyes of the mystic or a dreamer, but of a fighter, the eyes that one sees rarely in India. Even through her tipsiness she had a quick impression of his looking through her, as if he saw her naked, not in the flesh, but in the soul.

For a moment the experience sobered her, as if suddenly someone had dashed cold water in her face. She stared back at him and then turning away, she shrugged her shoulders and spoke to Krishna, telling him to gather up the rest of her belongings, find porters and be off. She was in a hurry to be off to the Taj Mahal Bar. Time was flying past her. For a second, even above the clamor on the platform, it seemed to her that she could hear it—a wild rushing sound. She must be on her way to enjoy herself. She was twenty-eight. There was so little time left.

When she had gone, Colonel Moti stood for a moment watching Merrill with that same penetrating, all-seeing look in the burning black eyes. When at last he spoke, he said, "Who's your girl friend?"

Merrill looked at him wearily, "I don't know. She was visiting the Yuvarajah—Jellapore's brother. The axle of her carriage broke and she had no place to go except the purdah carriage."

"A tart," said the Colonel, and he made the word seem worse than it was.

"Oh, she's all right."

The Doctor didn't argue. "Come along," he said. "You ought to be in bed." And again he looked sharply at the American, noting everything, the color of his eyeballs, the lines in the weary

face, the drooping shoulders. "You're not going back to Jellapore at once."

The shoulders straightened a little so that the powerful muscles stood out beneath the damp silk of his shirt. "I've got to go back. It's planting time."

"You're not going," said the Colonel.

In those days the Taj Mahal Hotel had the air of a vast middle western county jail. Built around two or three great wells which ran the full height of the building, the stairs were of stone and the railings of iron, and around the great wells ran galleries, likewise with stone floors and iron railings. Off these the rooms opened, each one more like a cell than a hotel room, each specially furnished with an iron bed covered with netting and with a single hard mattress, a washstand, and a couple of stiff uncomfortable chairs. Overhead there was a large old-fashioned electric *punkah*, and outside on the cool slate floors slept the bearers. They slept there not only at night, but all through the hot days, when they were not gossiping with other bearers. The jail-like corridors were as much an exchange place of gossip as any market place. The bearers from one end to the other of the vast hotel knew everything about every guest of the hotel, his vices, his peculiarities, his meannesses or generousities. It was as if each room were walled with glass for all the world to look inside.

And downstairs on the ground floor there was a vast hallway and a huge stairway which led up and up into the heights of the big hotel. Through the hallway and the bazaar which occupied half its area, came and went a procession of Arab horsedealers, British Governors and Civil Servants, Russian and German trollops, Indian princes, jewel merchants, Parsee millionaires, comic middle-aged tourists, gamblers, oil prospectors. The procession went on day and night, for in the heat of the city and with the fantastic character of many of the guests, the place was as alive at four in the morning as at midday.

Above the vast hallway there was another great room for dancing and drinking—a room with vast windows opening opposite the Readymoney Building against the heat, with a huge bar which ran across all one end of it where a score of bartenders, working on

shifts, mixed gimlets and gin slings and *chota pegs* and served gin and tonic in quantities vast enough to float a ship. Around the edges of the dance floor, inside the tables, "advanced" Indian girls and Russian and German tarts danced odd versions of what they believed to be the latest American dances. In those days, Bombay was a wide open town. The Taj Mahal, like the Raffles Hotel in Singapore and the Hotel des Indes in Batavia, was a famous rendezvous for men and women from all over the East. They came from Sumatra and Macassar and the Malay States, from Medan Deli and Semarang and Borneo and Ceylon and Sourabaya. There is a legend that the hotel was designed to face the bay but that the Indian contractors who built it put it up wrong way around and that the English architect who designed it took one look at it on his arrival in Bombay and, seeing what they had done, hanged himself. Like the designer of Cologne Cathedral, rumored to have been the devil, his name has been lost.

As she came in through the great hall, followed by Krishna in his purple and gold, most of the people watching them knew her at once. The employees of the hotel knew her and the gamblers and the rich Parsees, the merchants and the poor down-at-the-heel Russian and German girls in whose tired eyes there gleamed for a moment a weary resentment that she had done so well and had all the luck while they worked so hard. And those who had not seen her before, coming and going to Indian States with the Taj Mahal always as a base, noticed her, because it was impossible not to have noticed the big handsome blonde girl with expensive clothes and an air of recklessness.

Among the newcomers to whom she was a stranger was the tired, hard greasy woman whom Stitch Trollope had called the spy. She sat in a wicker chair curiously alone in a room so filled with movement and noise and color, an island in the ocean of nationalities. She gave the impression of always having been alone. In her hands she carried the little string of beads which Persians and some Greeks carry with them to finger and count as they talk or sit silent; with them it is a kind of habit which takes the place of smoking cigarettes. She had been turning the beads around and around, over and over again, for a couple of hours, as she sat there,

but at sight of the big, blonde girl her hands grew still and the faint clicking of the rosewood beads one against the other, ceased. The small, green eyes followed the figure of the girl as she spoke to the clerk, and the old woman thought, her lips even moving a little, "That is the girl I want. She's not too young or too old. She must know her way about. By the look of her she's American. She's a little bit drunk. That may be good or not so good. Maybe my luck is in again." American girls were what she needed. Russians were an old story in dying Europe. The French made too much trouble and wanted too much money. No, for a first class place it was an American girl that was needed. Everything that had to do with music and dancing was American now. This was just the one. She looked well and she wasn't too young and it was quite obvious that she was experienced.

The beads in her hands were still while she watched the girl leave and go into the lift followed by Krishna carrying a box which the Baroness divined must contain jewelry. When the lift door had closed, she left her chair and, trailing an aroma of patchouli behind her, went to the desk and asked, "Who is dat girl?"

The clerk, suspicious, said, "I can't give out the names of the guests. It is a rule here."

"D'you think I can't find oud from any vaiter?"

"Yes, Madame, but I can't tell you."

Unabashedly she asked, "Has she been here before?"

"Yes, often."

"Vat does she do?"

"Nothing."

"Vy is she here?"

"I can't tell you, Madame."

"All right. Keep your secret. I vasn't born yesterday."

But the clerk was polite and did not make the obvious answer. He turned away a little and she went back to her chair. In a little while the tiny rosewood beads in her fat hands began to rattle back and forth again and the dirty diamonds to glitter darkly. She was planning again. It was the only fun she had. It was better even than the sight of fat bank statements from Paris and Cairo, Budapest and London and Amsterdam.

Upstairs Carol moved uncertainly along the stone balcony fol-

lowing the boy who was showing her to her old room—the one at the corner which overlooked the gateway to India and the whole Bay of Bombay. Behind came Krishna with the jewel case and a small valise. As they passed each bedroom door the bearer lying there on the cool stone, rose and salaamed. One or two, asleep despite the sound of the jazz band and the clamor of the hotel which came up through the vast staircase well, snored on, oblivious to the passage of Krishna's regal gold and purple. The others, at sight of it, touched their foreheads to the stone, each one a particle of the vast and troubled India where life was a struggle not simply to get ahead but to live at all, to have enough to eat to exist from one day to the next. All night they spent in bobbing up and down to stand aside or to salaam, according to the importance of the guests returning to their rooms. That there were in the long all-night procession alcoholics and prostitutes and gamblers and swindlers made no difference; each bearer stirred himself sleepily and rose to his feet. Not only was this the rule of the hotel; it was a rule imposed upon each one of them by a grim and even more stony authority, the necessity of living.<sup>1</sup> It was from these people going and coming all through the night, that each of them earned and begged and stole enough to provide rice and meat, scraps for undernourished families in the Punjab, in Bengal, in Goa, on the coasts of Malabar and Coromandel. They wakened, rose and salaamed and dozed again, a couple of hundred times a night, without complaint, patiently because that was their lot in life. In the next life, if they salaamed enough in this one, they might perhaps be among the alcoholics and gamblers and prostitutes who came and went—the salaamed instead of the salaaming, the fortunate instead of the starving.

Carol did not see the rising and falling of the soiled white-clad figures at all nor think of them. She had been born healthy and beautiful and blessed, and so she accepted life as she encountered it, leaving to God and Nature such things as justice and mercy and social conscience; and besides the gin was beginning to wear off again and the edge of her weariness beginning to show through the bright mantle of her high spirits. It was not only that her body itself was exhausted; the black eyes of the Indian doctor had some-

thing to do with it. She had been seeing them ever since she left the railway carriage.

She was glad to see the corner room again. It was as much home to her as any place in India, as much home indeed as any place she had lived in for a good many years. In India this was always the room she returned to, now from the North, now from the East, now from the South. It was in this room she could rest, sleeping all through the hot days to waken late in the afternoon in time to go to the races and gamble. It was in this room she could rest and be alone, walking about naked in the heat, shut away from all the world outside. Here in this room she could be herself. It was only lately that she had begun to feel the need of solitude, only lately that solitude had come to seem, without her thinking of it, a luxury.

And so when the porter opened the door and turned on the light, she flung herself down on the hard iron bed and said to Krishna, "Tell that boy to hurry up with the luggage—and get me a couple of gimlets right away. Hurry, Krishna!"

"Yes, Memsahib."

In the big bar which was so much like a Klondike saloon, Bill found a table for himself and Al, the radio officer and Sandy, the chief electrician of the S. S. *Sourabaya*, and Mrs. Trollope. For Bill the day had begun badly with the customs officer crushed by the packing case, and it had not gotten any better. When Stitch Trollope recovered herself, he sent Silas with his luggage to the Taj Mahal, and went with her to the palace of her sister. In the taxi she came out of her swoon almost immediately, without even asking, "Where am I?" She was the kind of woman who looked upon fainting as nonsense. One moment she opened her eyes and the next she was on her feet ready for a day's work. Indeed to Bill it seemed extraordinary that she should have fainted at all, even at the nasty sight of the poor man's messy death.

She hadn't wanted him to go with her; she had been so insistent about it that he thought there must be some reason more profound than simply that of inconveniencing him. But in the end, perhaps because she really did feel a little weak, she gave in, and together they set off in a rather rattletap taxi, driven by a Sikh with long



hair and a long beard and the air of one of the more desperate of the forty thieves.

As they drove along the hot streets past the Maidan and the Juhu Beach station and the Towers of Silence where the vultures hovered, and Government House which was like a big English country house only with Sikhs in scarlet and gold at the gate, the old excitement returned again. There was nothing like this in the world, no city so fantastic. Baghdad in its heyday was no more absurd and mixed-up and fascinating. And it gave him a kick that he should still be able to feel that way about it. But of that he said nothing to Stitch.

He tried to make conversation, but nothing much came of the effort. Mrs. Trollope only sat there, hard and neat and controlled, the leathery tint of her face gone a waxen white and her rather thin lips set in a hard line. Although she said she was all right, this was obviously not true; she was controlling herself. He had the feeling that if she did not sit there rigid, every muscle taut, she would give way to hysterics. In all their brief acquaintance, it had never occurred to him until now that she had inside the tough, small body even the possibility of hysteria.

They drove for a time along the Nepean Sea Road past the great white wedding cake which was the Bombay palace of Jellapore, then sharply the taxi turned and with a rush and a rattle charged up a steep, narrow road bordered by big bungalows and hanging gardens filled with jacqueranda, bignonia and bougainvillea. The pepper trees hung so low that they brushed the top of the taxi; and as they drove Bill, silent now, wondered whether the extraordinary tenseness of Mrs. Trollope had more to do with the approaching meeting with her sister than with the accident itself. Certainly there was something odd about the whole thing.

Then suddenly the taxi came out of the flower-bordered lane and into an open square before a palace, made of pink marble. It was not an enormous palace, not so large as the great structures built by the rulers of Baroda and Hyderabad. It had not the pastry cake quality of Jellapore's shining white palace. It was feminine, rather boudoirish and a little gaudy, as if a French architect of the nineties, who had made his reputation building brothels, had been asked to dabble in the Saracen style.

"This is it," said Mrs. Trollope.

A pair of Ghurkas, small Mongolian men, in dark green and silver stood on guard at each side of the door just inside the pink marble *porte cochère*. The taxi stopped, the driver's long beard blowing backward on each side of his dark face in the hot wind that had come up from the Arabian Sea. A servant appeared and opened the door. Mrs. Trollope, still tense, said, "Well, good-bye. And thank you for coming with me. It wasn't necessary."

She didn't say, "Come in and have a drink." He was dying for a drink, and that would have been the conventional thing for anyone in the East to do under the circumstances. But she said nothing.

"How about going to the races with me some afternoon?" he asked.

"Maybe. I'll ring you up. Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

He turned to the taxi driver. "The Taj Mahal," he said, and then it occurred to him how odd it was that Mrs. Trollope's sister had not sent a purple Rolls Royce to the pier and a boy to look after her baggage. He himself would have to go back in the rising heat to check up on it. Funny, Mrs. Trollope had never even mentioned it.

He found that nobody had done anything about her luggage. It still lay on the pier, all marked with Vuitton's mark, spattered with labels from half the countries of the world, expensive once but worn now, and battered with much traveling. He sent it along to the palace of the Maharani of Chandragar, and at last, sweating and dying for a drink, he drove back to his hotel. But even then he found no peace. In the corridor outside the room assigned him he found in a line awaiting him a Parsee bookmaker, a Persian jewel merchant, a Koja jewel merchant, two dealers in curios, both Gujerati, a tailor and a Goanese looking for a post as cook. Before the porter had put the key in the lock, they crowded around him, each trying to outshout the others in pidgin English.

Heat, annoyance at the smell of his visitors broke his good nature and he shouted, "Go away! Get out! I don't want anything. Go away and leave me alone!"

But the shouting had no effect. When he entered the room, they all pushed and fought to get in the door first. Turning suddenly he gave one of the bookmakers a push backwards into the others and managed to slip the key in the lock and turn it.

In the corner of the room he found the real culprit. Silas was at work unpacking, benignly and all too consciously innocent of any connection with the mob outside the door. Under the ragged and dirty khaki suit his thin back was eloquent. It said, "Sahib, I know nothing of those low-born dogs." For a second Bill felt an impulse to fall upon the bearer and give him a thorough beating, because he knew very well that Silas had brought them all, hoping for sales and a commission for himself. Then the sight of the eloquent back of Silas made him want to laugh. He was so elaborately concerned with taking everything out of the bags and putting them conscientiously in the wrong combinations in the wrong drawers so that all the rest of the stay would be poisoned every time his master dressed himself.

All Bill said was, "Go and get me a gin sling, quick."

In any case there was no use arguing with Silas. He would deny everything and in the end you would only come out of it with a loss of face. Anyway, some of it was his own fault for the way he had lived when he was last in Bombay—buying things, betting, throwing money out of the window. They all remembered him. It was just possible that the vultures outside the door might forget a good customer but none of them would ever forget a sap.

"Well," he thought, "that's all over. This time I'm the sober business man."

As Silas opened the door he caught a glimpse of the crowd outside. They had not gone away. It seemed to him that their numbers had been augmented.

By now his clothing was wet from the heat and clung to him, making the heat seem all the worse. As quickly as possible, he took them off, turned on the *punkah* and lay down on the bed naked with a sheet over him. The *punkah* churned the damp, dead air but made the room no cooler. He thought, "This is certainly a bad beginning. Everything has gone wrong." The irritation which was so much a part of India had taken possession of him immediately.

That too was a bad sign. Perhaps, he thought, it would be better to finish up his business and leave by the first boat.

Closing his eyes he tried to imagine icebergs and electric refrigerators and glaciers, but none of it did any good. Then he heard the sound of a door opening softly and turning, he saw a lean dark face, and a pair of black eyes and behind it other pairs of black eyes peering at him. Jumping off the bed he ran naked to the door and slammed it, shouting, "Get out of here and stay out!"

Silas came a little later and after the drink, Bill felt a little better. While he drank, Silas plunged again into the task of throwing his belongings into utter confusion. For a moment Bill watched him, fascinated by his misdirected conscientiousness. Then he said, "Go away, Silas, for God's sake, and leave me in peace. Don't come back till five o'clock. Then you can go on with your work of destruction."

Silas grinned at him, "Very good, Sahib." And half-way to the door he said, "I sent away bad mans outside door but bad mans won't go."

"Go away. Leave me in peace and stop lying."

But Silas lingered. His glance fell reproachfully downward at his tattered costume of torn khaki. Bill waited and when this first pantomime made no impression, the boy lifted one ragged arm and examined the sleeve carefully. Again Bill had to laugh. Taking a ten rupee note from his pocket he gave it to the boy and said, "All right. Go and get yourself a new suit."

Certainly it was a bad day. But presently he fell asleep and slept soundly until he was roused by Silas pounding on the door. When he sat up he discovered that it was not yet five o'clock but only half past three and that he had a stiff neck from sleeping practically naked under the *punkah*. And it was still hotter, hotter than it had been when he went to sleep.

Once again he cursed Silas and was rewarded only by a wide white-toothed grin. Silas displayed a different costume, obviously not a new one but one he had had for a long time—"One perhaps," Bill thought, "that I bought him when I was here before."

The black face grinned as Silas asked, "Master pleased?"

"Yes, pleased as hell, you bloody embezzler."

He took a shower and spent ten minutes finding a complete

fresh costume from out of the confusion created by the bearer. Then when he opened the door he stepped full into the midst of the "bad mans." As one cluster of flies attracts other flies, their numbers had been increased by newcoming bookmakers and tailors and jewel salesmen. Cries assailed him on all sides.

"Remember Hakim, Sahib?"

"Doti, old friend. Doti make plenty money for Sahib last time."

"Sahib bought plenty rubies from Raschid, last visit."

Pushing his way through them, he hurried along the stone balcony followed by the whole tribe, still gesticulating and calling out, still unconvinced that the Sahib who had brought them so much profit on the last visit was not interested on this one.

Only at the vast stairway was he able to shake them off. They dared not follow him belowstairs for fear of being thrown out. Perspiring all over again, he reached the telephone and called Hinkle at the Amalgamated Oil office still wondering why Hinkle had not met him at the boat in response to his wireless. Even if you were the Bombay manager, you didn't altogether ignore the son of the boss.

The office gave him his answer, the last piece of bad luck during the day. Hinkle was in Burma on a holiday, shooting. The office didn't know exactly where. Even if they could get the message to him at once it would take him nearly a week to return, and it might even require a week to find him and deliver the message.

"I'm sorry, sir," said the groveling Birmingham voice of the clerk over the wire. "We'll do the best we can, but if I were you, I wouldn't count on seeing him before a fortnight."

"Thank you," said Bill, and slammed down the old-fashioned receiver. "To hell with it," he thought. "I've got to see him. I might as well enjoy myself in Bombay while I'm waiting." And then the thought struck him that maybe all those black-eyed "bad mans" who haunted the corridor outside his door were right, the way Indians for some strange reason nearly always were. Maybe he wasn't going to be the reformed young man after all, but just a sap as he had been the other time. A sap, a bloody sap! He had a sudden feeling of a vast, almost mystical pressure working against him and all his good resolutions, the combined forces of all those

"bad mans" or fate, or maybe the Baroness had put a curse on him, or maybe it was just his own weak character.

"Good-time Charlie!" That was what Carol used to call him. He grinned. "That was it. 'Good-time Charlie'!"

Then as he stepped from the telephone box, a dark page boy said, "Mr. Wainwright, a call for you. Mrs. Trollope."

The familiar, hoarse whiskey voice came to him over the telephone. The tenseness was gone from it. "I want to go out tonight. Will you take me to Green's for dinner and then to the Taj bar?"

"Sure, I'll come and get you."

"No, I'll meet you at the hotel at seven-thirty. We can have a drink first."

"It's no trouble to come and get you."

For a moment the tension came into her voice again, "No. No. I'll be out playing bridge. I'll just come to the hotel."

"Okay."

And so she had come to the hotel, looking fresh again and restored and too neat and a little too mannish in her white tailored suit and a white felt hat pulled over one eye. Yet when he saw her sitting opposite him on the terrace at Green's, he experienced again that feeling of satisfaction at the sight of anyone so cool and neat and efficient among so many sweaty, blowsy, dowdy women. Her presence was, somehow, like that of a cool and able nurse in the midst of the confusion attending a disaster. What the disaster was, he could not divine very clearly, unless it was Bombay itself with its strange swarming assortment of people, all living together, most of them hungry, always on the verge of riot and disorder, a place where smallpox was endemic and superstition grew and flourished like fungus in a cave, where one race was divided from another and religions were perpetually at war.

The dinner went off pleasantly because the terrace at Green's Hotel made everything easy. You sat as you ate, overlooking the whole harbor with a fat, rich, hot moon overhead, and the food was good and around you the people were fantastic and the spectacle entertaining—sea-faring men who would have been embarrassed by the mid-Victorian imperial elegance of the Taj Mahal dining room, English officers and civil servants and clerks who were

there because Green's was Bohemian and as wild a place as they dared frequent in a community where everything, every move one made, sooner or later became known; tired, plain girls shipped out from the British Isles to relatives in the East to find husbands; hard girls on the verge of middle-age from Hove and Cardiff and Liverpool and London whom some strange fate had dumped into Bombay as sleazy tap dancers and members of a ladies' orchestra. And here and there a stray Russian tart or an "advanced" Parsee or Khoja woman dining alone with a man.

Stitch asked him a great many questions about himself, so many that at one moment he laughed and asked, "Why am I being cross-examined?"

"Because I like to know about people."

She found out how rich his father was, and that he had been married and that his wife had been a show-girl, and that the marriage had come to an end, amiably on both sides, simply because they had both agreed that there wasn't any point in their staying married.

"Were you in love with her?" Stitch asked.

The question puzzled him for a moment. He hesitated, grinned and said, "I don't know. I was crazy for her for about three weeks, till I got enough of what I wanted. I guess I don't know what being in love means."

"It means plenty."

"Have you been?"

"Yes."

Half mischievously he asked, "What's it like?"

He asked the question humorously but she didn't take it that way. The small hard face became grim. "Well, if you'd been in love you'd know it. Just thank God you never have been and hope you never will be."

It was as if they were two men talking together, except that no man, unless he was a phony or a sentimentalist, would have been so grim about it. The grimness made him uneasy and in his nervousness, he said, "We were both kids. I had plenty of dough. I think we wanted to sleep with each other, and so we just ran off and got married. I was a junior at Cornell."

"What's Cornell?" Stitch asked.

"A University."

"I thought everybody who was rich in America went to Harvard or Yale."

He laughed, "Not quite. That's why my father sent me to Cornell. He thought Harvard or Yale would be a bad influence. He never thought much of my character. You see he was a missionary's son born in China. He made all his own money. He said he wanted me to go to an American school, not to a phony English one."

Stitch didn't answer him but sat looking out over the harbor. The boat from Karachi and the Kathiawar ports up the coast of the Persian Gulf was coming in, a low line of lights slipping across the moonlit water between them and the darkness of Elephanta. And for the first time in his life, on the terrace of Green's Hotel in Bombay he had a sudden comprehensive picture of his father—an extraordinarily clear picture of a heavy, humorless, rather grim man, whose every move was carefully weighed, whose smallest decision was a matter of ponderous responsibility. They had never understood each other, even for a moment, and there had never been any sympathy between them. To his father life was an affair of immense seriousness. And he was always right. That made it all very difficult—when someone so serious, so pompous, was always right.

A long time passed in which he wasn't in Bombay at all but back in America. And Stitch, it was clear, had gone off somewhere too, he did not know where. The cigarette dwindled away unnoticed until it burned her fingers. She crushed it out and said suddenly, with fierceness in her voice, "My father went to Australia because he had to."

He guessed what she meant and felt very shy suddenly about leading her into further confessions. He simply said, "My father is really a swell guy. I think that some day we may understand each other." And for the first time in his life he felt a kind of sympathy and understanding for the ageing man on the other side of the world.

"Living makes a lot of difference," Stitch said. "Sooner or later, I guess, you have to make sense in life or get the worst end of every-



thing. Families are funny things." Then suddenly she rose and said, "Let's get out of here and go to the bar."

In the noise of the huge bar, the dark mood of the terrace left them. They both began to drink in earnest, and presently Al, the wireless officer and Sandy, the chief electrician of the big white *Souradaya* joined them. They were both a little drunk. Al was grinning. The more he drank the more he grinned. He was a man who worried and alcohol always made him stop worrying. And Sandy was always having trouble with his false teeth. That was always a sign when Sandy passed the safety mark. The false teeth kept getting out of place.

Stitch became unnaturally gay and wanted to dance, so in turn the three of them took her round the floor. She danced well although she was a little too short for any of them. While she danced with Sandy, Al said, "She's a good scout, Mrs. Trollope."

"She's no fool."

"Bombay is a hell of a town," said Al.

Bill had begun to feel pleasantly hazy. He asked "Why?" although he didn't much care.

"You can never find the kind of girl you like."

"You're too choosy." He knew what Al meant. He was a nice-minded fellow. He didn't like tarts. He wanted a girl from a nice respectable middle-class family who was a little wild and would go in for a roll behind the hedge with a man who had come from sea. Certainly that was hard to find in Bombay. So Al was getting drunk instead.

A troupe of sparrows suddenly swooped in through the big windows, flew about blinded by the glare of the lights and presently found their way out again.

"Even the birds don't go to bed here."

Then Stitch and the chief electrician came back to the table. The chief electrician mopped his ruddy face with a handkerchief. Stitch ordered another drink and something happened to the evening. It began to die, the gayety, the spirit, the effect of all the gin, going out like air out of a pricked balloon. More drinks didn't bring anything back. It just occurred to Bill that Mrs. Trollope hadn't been gay at all. It was just nerves and now she was sunk—plenty sunk.

It was time to call the party off and go home, but nobody had the energy to move. In the heat and noise they only sat and drank more and watched the crowd on the floor. The bewildered sparrows flew in and out of the big windows again, and then, his brain half-asleep, in the heat, Bill saw something he could not believe.

She was standing in the doorway, dressed in a red dress, watching the jiggling figures on the dance floor. His first impression was that she had not changed at all. The golden hair, the superb figure, the blooming look of enormous vitality were the same. Then as she leaned against the doorway, he saw that she had been drinking, and he thought at once, "She must be bored. She never drank too much unless she was bored and didn't know what to do with herself." And he knew why she was standing there in the doorway alone. She was hoping to find someone she knew who would take her on a party. He thought, "How in the name of God did she come to turn up here?" And at the same time he was aware of something lovely about the figure in the red dress; it was the same feeling he had had long ago, the first time he ever saw her. She had the old look of false innocence about her. No matter what happened to her she would always look innocent.

For a moment he thought, "I won't speak to her. I'll forget it and keep out of sight." But that, he knew, was impossible in a place like Bombay, unless he chose to shut himself up in his room in the hotel and lead the life of a man in a Turkish bath. And the sight of her roused a whole procession of memories, out of a life which he had been trying to make himself believe was dead. Then suddenly he knew that he could not help himself. In the past he had never been able to help himself, and it was no different now. In the heat his brain felt soggy, but with this emotion neither his brain nor his will power was involved. That much he had learned from experience. For a moment he was even a little afraid. But for the gin he had been drinking, he might have run away and then the whole story would have been different. Long afterward he knew that all the trouble began in that moment—when he knew that he *had* to speak to her.

She looked toward their table and for a moment, as her glance remained for a second fixed on them he thought that she recognized him, but she looked away again, perhaps not believing her own eyes.

He heard Mrs. Trollope say, "What are you staring at?"

"Someone I know. May I bring her over here?"

"Why not?" Mrs. Trollope grinned. "I was just about to go back to my sister's."

Al brightened a little, hopeful that the party might take on new life, "Sure, bring her!"

She did not notice him coming toward her until he was a few feet away. The change in the expression on her face was so sudden and so comic that he laughed. She came to meet him, saying, "Bill! For Gawd's sake, what are you doing here?" And then throwing both arms about him, she kissed him and said, "God, am I glad to see you!"

Then on his side there was a sudden awkwardness. He didn't quite know what to do next. It made him feel very silly. He said, "Come on over and join us."

"Sure," she said, "I thought I was going to have to go to bed. I was on the lookout for a party. I saw a couple of people but they weren't what I wanted."

"Where are you staying?"

"Here, of course, in the hotel."

"Gosh, that's funny. Who's with you?"

"Nobody."

That, he thought, was a little odd. His impulse was to ask, "What are you up to?" but it was too soon for that. He would have to find that out later, a little at a time. She had a bad temper, he knew, when she thought people were prying into her affairs.

"A coincidence—our both being here," she said, "it just shows what a small place the world is."

It had never been her mind that attracted him. On the contrary, it had been her mind which was the principal irritation. She was always saying things like that. The old reaction swiftly followed the old irritation.

"It's a coincidence," he said, "every time two people meet on the street."

She laughed, "Don't begin cracking at me already. I told you long ago it wasn't my brains that got me ahead in this world."

And then they were at the table and he saw in the eyes of Al,

the chief electrician and Mrs. Trollope that look which always came into the eyes of people seeing her for the first time. It was a look, which, when he was a little younger, had made him feel naïvely proud to be seen out with her. It was a look which bore witness to the fact that the human race was still pretty animal, to be so excited at the sight of so much beauty and health and good spirits. It was always the same—men, especially older men, seemed to acquire strength simply from the sight of her; younger men at sight of her threw out their chests and wisecracked and showed off. Sometimes women hated her on sight, but that was only if they thought themselves good-looking enough to compete. There was never anything in between. She was a girl you couldn't pass over with indifference.

The look in Al's Irish eyes asked him, "Where did you find this one?" for it was undeniable that she looked like a tart. Long ago he had reproached her with that and she told him that she liked to look like a tart because it burned up other women and she didn't like women anyway. Sometimes she behaved like a tart; that was what forever got her into trouble. That was what Al was thinking now, "Bill's got a hell of a good-looking woman, the best in Bombay."

When it came to introducing her, he hesitated for a second, and then said, "This is a friend of mine—Carol Halma." It was better not to say anything about their having been married once. It only led to a lot of explanations. But he always found it difficult to say the preposterous made-up name she had chosen for herself. It would have been much easier if he could have called her by the name her parents had given her—plain "Olga Janssen." Out of the corner of his eye he saw that she didn't mind. She minded very few things in life. And she nearly always understood what a man was up to.

The party came to life again almost at once.

Once the blonde woman was gone out of the railway carriage, the look in the eyes of Colonel Moti changed. The fierceness went out of them, as the rigidness went out of his small, erect figure, and in place of the fierceness there came a look of tenderness almost maternal. His nature was one of violence, and his mood could change as quickly as a cobra could strike. It wasn't that he had any

personal dislike for the woman he had found in the railway carriage of his friend Merrill; the thing which moved him so violently was his hatred of her as a symbol of a class which in his passionate philosophy he had long since labeled as useless and pernicious. He recognized the symbol at once by the lacquered nails, the expensive clothes, the jewel case. Nor was it the hatred of the man for a prostitute or of a symbol of the whole class of prostitutes. To him, prostitutes were unfortunate or misguided or the victims of a deranged glandular or economic system. His moral indignation never arose from any passion against sexual but against social immorality.

So when the woman left the car he took a deep breath as if the air had been suddenly purified, and said, "Did you have a bad journey, Homer?"

"No, not bad. Hot, but no worse than usual."

He said a word in English to Tommy, and shyly spoke in Hindustani to Ali, the blind Moslem boy. He was shy with children. He had never had any of his own.

Then he said, "Who was that woman?"

"I don't know anything about her. She's been staying with Jellapore's brother."

"Why?"

Merrill, although he was still suffering, laughed at the concentrated fury of that single word "Why?" and what lay behind it—Moti's unmitigated hatred of the whole Jellapore family as wasters and bad rulers. Then he said, "I don't know. How could I know? I never saw her before and will probably never see her again. I shouldn't think her very important one way or another."

"Maybe yes . . . maybe no." The Colonel had been helping collect the luggage, directing two coolies. He looked up saying, "Anyway, you'd better come along home as soon as possible and get to bed."

"Is it all right about Ali's operation?"

"Yes. Dr. Bliss was going to sail but I persuaded him to stay over till the next boat."

"I appreciate that. In a way Ali is almost like a brother to Tommy. He's been living with us since he went blind altogether."

The Indian boy, he knew, could not understand what they were

saying. He had slipped down off the divan and was standing now, patiently. There was a strange stillness about him, the stillness of resignation which in a child so young had a quality of heartbreak.

"There were three other cases—two from Rajputana and one from Bhopal. He's operated one already."

Merrill looked at him. "Was it successful?"

"Yes," said Colonel Moti. Then suddenly he smiled and asked, "You love the boy, don't you?"

"Yes. He's a nice boy."

"That's why I love you," said the Colonel. "That's why you've got to have a rest."

"I've got to go back to Jellapore in ten days."

"You're not going back in ten days—not till I've fixed you up. Not unless you want to crack up altogether and be of no use to anyone."

"I'm all right."

"You're too valuable a man." The indignant look came again into Colonel Moti's eyes. "You're just being a God-damned fool!"

Merrill grinned and was silent. It was no use trying to argue with Moti because the hotter an argument became, the more dictatorial became Moti, the more he believed he was God. Anyway, it wasn't the first time that he (Merrill) had been ill, maybe not so ill as this time. He'd always pulled out of it before, and he would again. When Tommy had gone away and Ali's operation was over, he'd simply go back to Jellapore without arguing at all.

Two taxicabs were needed to take the party to Colonel Moti's house. The Colonel had no motor of his own, even though he could have claimed one, considering his position as head of the Institute of Tropical Diseases. He preferred to use the money for the Institute itself; God knew it was hard enough to get money for it. And the price of a motor went a long way in a country where labor was cheap and a workman could live on a little rice and curry once a day. So the Colonel, despite his rank and his renown in the world, rode on the crowded tramcars or if he went to an important government dinner, took a taxicab. He liked the smelly tramcars, overburdened with humanity. It kept him from forgetting what humanity, swarming Indian humanity, was like. And he heard a lot of things on tramcars which he couldn't have

heard elsewhere, what with his fame and distinction constantly operating to isolate him from the people.

On leaving the station, the taxis did not follow the course of Carol's taxi, in the direction of the Taj Mahal Hotel, the Bombay Yacht Club and Malabar Hill. Instead, the two taxis turned north-west past Crawford Market in the direction of the Mill district, and with each block the houses and tenements grew shabbier and more sordid, the streets more overcrowded. In the hot air every coolie, every mill worker, every low caste Hindu had come out of the tenements into the streets, crowding the sidewalks, jostling the vendors of sweetmeats, overflowing the gutters into the tramcar tracks where the cars, overladen with passengers seeking even the faintest stirring of air, moved at the pace of tortoises, clanging their bells. Here and there an ancient gramophone scratched out Indian music. Children swarmed under foot. As the taxis pushed their way through the mob, the Colonel forgot to speak, and while Merrill leaned back, his eyes closed, the pain drumming in the top of his head, he watched the swarming spectacle, a faint smile curling the corners of his hard mouth. These were his people. In a way he knew them all, all the thousands of them, with their ignorance and superstition and starvation and abysmal patience. It was for them he was fighting, to bring light to them and health and spirit and dignity. It was for them that he denied himself a motor and lived meagerly like the very sadhus he detested.

Presently the taxis left the slums and the Mill district and came into a district where the poor crowded into crumbling houses which once had sheltered the families of rich merchants. It was better here; there was at least a little space and air and a few ragged gardens where banyan and peepul and Java fig trees cast black shadows in the moonlight. And presently, at the Colonel's direction, they turned in a narrow street and came to the Institute of Tropical Diseases and the Colonel's bungalow.

It was a moderate-sized building with an open space covered with gravel surrounding it. Two great Java fig trees grew beside it and in the corners of the walled garden a few shrubs. In the house there was a single light and as they drew up to the door, the figure of a woman in a white and silver sari appeared at the top of the steps.

Merrill, opening his eyes, saw the dancer standing on the edge of the verandah all glistening and white in the moonlight, and the thought came to him that the small figure in its purity symbolized both herself and her husband. They were both too white, too pure, too fanatic to be of this world. They were not like himself, who, for all his absorption in his work, still had disturbing, sometimes torturing visions of the flesh and its pleasures. Even in the heat of the evening the still figure appeared clean and cool. With sudden envy he thought, "What peace she must have—what peace they must both know."

He said, "You didn't tell me Indira was at home."

"She only arrived this morning on the P and O boat," said Moti. "I forgot to tell you."

The inside of the bungalow had the quality of Moti and his wife. The big cool rooms were clean, the furniture bare and simple. The only ornaments were a collection of Persian jade and a dozen Mogul pictures. Those were Mrs. Moti's which she had bought with her own money, earned by dancing in half the capitals of the world. To her these were as necessary as all the shining equipment of a laboratory to Colonel Moti.

For Merrill, the house was an oasis in the heat and confusion and turmoil of India, and each time he left the hot squalid villages where he worked, he came straight here to refresh his soul. It was not only that he found peace, but he rediscovered faith, for there were times when the endless backsliding of the villages and the malarial apathy of the villagers themselves brought him near to the edge of despair. This bungalow had been, too, a kind of refuge from his wife, up to the very day of her death. When life at home became unbearable, he could come to the Motis', where he knew she would never follow him. She had hated them because when he was with them he escaped into a realm of the spirit where she could not follow.

Mrs. Moti led him to a big room and said, "This is for you and Tommy. Shall I put Ali in the compound?"

For a second he looked at her, surprised, and then he saw that what she proposed was the natural thing for an Indian to suggest.



She had believed that the blind son of the mahout would feel more comfortable among the servants.

"If you don't mind," he said, "I'll keep him in here with us. You see, he's been living with us. He's never been away from home before. I'll have the boys bring in an Indian bed."

Then she went away to give the order, and when she was gone, he sat down on the edge of his bed, feeling dizzy again and feverish, but even through the fever he kept seeing her in the white and silver sari. She was neither very young nor very beautiful but he too felt in her the perfection of art; it lay in the lacquered nails, the softly drawn hair, the perfect carving of the small oval face, and above all, in the stillness which seemed to envelop her. Wherever she went everything seemed to become cool and serene. Wearily he thought, "I would like to stay here forever to rest and rest and rest." For it was his spirit as much as his strong body which was ill and tired.

When she returned she said, "There is some dinner for you. When Moti told me you were coming I arranged it. There is some fresh goat's milk for the boys. It comes from the laboratory goats so you needn't be afraid of anything."

When they had dined, Merrill and the two boys returned to their room to sleep. Usually he liked to sit up half the night with the Colonel, talking about his discoveries and about his own work among the villages of Jellapore. But tonight he was too weary and ill, and the Colonel knew it. After he had undressed and had a shower Moti came in and gave him a sedative.

"That's what you need," he said, "sleep. Sleep late tomorrow. If the boys waken first, Indira will take them to see the birds and the animals at Crawford Market." He spoke as if little blind Ali would be able to see the brilliantly colored birds, but it may have been that he knew his wife would make him see them.

Presently Merrill fell asleep and during the night he dreamed wild, rather delirious dreams. Sometimes the central figure was Indira Moti, cool and sure and clean, in the white and silver sari, and sometimes they were of the woman he had seen on the train, beautiful, tempting, fleshly, of the earth, a kind of half-clad heathen goddess who had annihilated the frightful pain and brought him another kind of peace which the dancer could never bring him.

Because of the sedative, he did not waken until noon, and when he wakened the pain was still there pressing on the top of his head and his spirit was still unrefreshed.

Then he remembered that in the night, in the midst of his distorted dreams he had wakened and found his friend Moti standing there, looking down at him. What he did not know was that Moti, looking down at him, had thought, "We must not lose him. He is one of us. We need him and his spirit." And afterward when the fierce Colonel had gone back to his wife's room, the two of them had talked for a long time, planning how they would save him and bring him back to health. It was talk that would have astonished Merrill, because it was so removed from anything he had been taught or believed long ago in the house of his father in the Genesee Valley on the other side of the world.

At about the hour that Merrill wakened to find his friend standing over him, Al, the wireless officer, and Sandy, the chief electrician (whose false teeth had now become completely uncontrollable), left the table in the bar on the other side of the hot city to return to their boat. They had a few hours more and then the big white boat would be off again past Cape Cormorin, and through the Malay Straits on its way to Sydney. Tipsily they said, good-bye and went their way, a little regretfully because they were a little drunk and feeling sentimental over the thought that very likely they would never again see either Bill or Mrs. Trollope. In the morning they would wake with a headache and Sandy would have to search for his false teeth before going on duty and then about eleven their great hotel of a ship would sail with a lot of new passengers and some of the old ones and they would find new friends to take the place of Bill and Mrs. Trollope, and presently they would forget them. Their life was like that. But at the moment they felt sentimental, and Al was sober enough to regret having gotten so far along with his drinking that he couldn't enjoy this gay and beautiful friend of Bill's who had turned up so suddenly out of nowhere.

So they took a long time with their farewells, leaning on the backs of their chairs to steady themselves. Sandy even wept a little, and all the time, in spite of his fondness for them, Bill wanted

them to go so that he could talk to Carol; there were so many things he wanted to ask her.

But at last they went, weaving their way in their white clothes, through the pushing noisy crowd, and that left only Mrs. Trollope.

In the midst of the fun the old grimness had returned to her suddenly. It seemed to come over her at the moment Carol put her arm around Bill's neck in a friendly way and said, "My Gawd, it's good to see you again, honey."

Bill thought, "I suppose she thinks that's vulgar. Well, if she does—to hell with her."

She didn't go home. She just sat there, grim and silent most of the time. Sometimes she watched the crowd, turning her back ostentatiously, but now and then she turned to look at them, and once she said, "I'm going to give a party for you two. How long are you staying here, Miss Halma?"

Carol put down her drink. "Till my money gives out. I haven't got any plans."

And then a dark man, an Indian, rather plump and dressed in remarkably well-cut London clothes, came over to them from out of the crowd and said in perfect English, "Hello, Carol, when did you get back?"

"Tonight." She pushed back a chair and added, "Sit down and have a drink," and then introduced him. His name, it seemed, was Mr. Botlivala.

He didn't sit down. He only stood there, his hands on the back of the chair, saying, "No, I can't stay. I'm with some English people. What are you doing tomorrow?"

"I don't know. Ring me up."

"I'll ring you up."

"Not too early. Not before lunch time."

"All right." He bowed and the bow, in spite of his clothes and his perfect continental manner, was Oriental, a trifle too low, a trifle too exaggerated, like a salaam. Then he went away.

It was only when he had gone that it occurred to Bill that the stranger had scarcely looked at Carol at all, but had only stared at himself. And he remembered too Mr. Botlivala's hands—very long and thin and very collapsible, and very odd on a body so plump

and sensual. They were repulsive hands, and cruel and incongruous. Bill couldn't remember the face at all—only the hands.

Mrs. Trollope lighted one cigarette from another and said, "I know who he is."

"He's stinking rich," said Carol.

"I'd keep clear of him, my dear," said Mrs. Trollope. "There was a scandal about some dancing girls."

"That's an old one," said Carol. "There wasn't anything in it. I know him awfully well."

Suddenly Mrs. Trollope stiffened. "How well?"

Carol laughed, "Not as well as that. I don't find him very attractive. But he's rich and he likes to spend his money. I'm never one to discourage a man like that."

It was Bill who said, "He's not very attractive."

Without any warning, Mrs. Trollope said sharply, "I don't see how a woman can have such a man come near her."

Bill wanted to say, "What the hell business is it of yours?" Mostly because he was a little sick of Mrs. Trollope and wished she would go home.

But Carol didn't seem to mind. "I'm not so particular," she said.

"Would you like to come to tea tomorrow?" Mrs. Trollope asked.

"I'd love to, if I get up in time. Where?"

"At my sister's. I'm staying with her. I'll come for you."

"Better ring me up first."

Then Mrs. Trollope turned to Bill. "I can't ask you. It'll be a *zenana* party. No men allowed."

"Okay," he said, but he wondered why she had lied, shamelessly, when she knew perfectly well that he was aware her sister lived like a European and did not keep purdah.

Then she rose and pulled the white felt hat further over her eyes and said, "Well, I'll run along, I guess."

"Can we drop you?"

"No, the car is waiting for me."

"We can, you know."

"No, I can take care of myself. Thanks for the party, Bill."

Then she smiled at Carol, "I'll ring you up."

"Okay," said Carol. "Not too early."

When she had gone, Bill said, "She was a pain in the neck most of the evening."

"Where did you find her?"

"On shipboard."

"She's not your type. Nothing very fluffy about her."

"No," he laughed. "Maybe I'm changing my type."

"Well, she's the kind that goes in for young boys."

"Nuts!" said Bill.

She said, "I want another drink."

"No, you don't."

"Why not?"

"I want to talk to you. We're just right now."

"Yes, but I may sink."

"No, you won't." Then after a moment, he added suddenly, "What are you up to?"

"Nothing. Just enjoying myself. Anyway, you needn't be so grim about it."

"How did you get here?"

"I came out with some people from London. You wouldn't know them. They went Goona-goona—off to Bali. I was having a good time so I stayed here."

"What are you doing?"

"Visiting Maharajahs, and going to the races and buying jewelry."

He thought, "She can't afford that. She hasn't enough money unless she's spending her capital or somebody is helping her."

"It's my turn now," she said. "What are you doing here?"

He told her and she said very seriously, "I'm glad you've settled down. The playboy stuff wasn't your type."

"Maybe. I've been good for a long time now—and respectable and hard-working. But I might go off the track."

She looked at him gravely. Then she said, "Not with me, you won't."

"Why?"

"Because I'm not going to get you started all over again."

"What are you going to do when you leave here?"

"Go back to Paris."

"What for?"

"I enjoy myself there."

"Are you ever going to marry again?"

"If I find the right guy. I'm engaged now, but I'm not going to marry him."

"Who is he?"

She didn't answer at once. Before she answered, she laughed. Then she said, "To that guy who came over to the table."

"The Indian?"

"He's a Parsee."

"How come?"

"He kept asking me and giving me presents. So I said 'Yes' I'd be engaged to him if it made him feel any better but I wouldn't promise anything."

"Nothing more."

"Not a damned thing. I don't allow him to touch me. You see, most of them are nuts for blondes."

"It seems kind of corny to me."

"Mebbe it is." She lighted a cigarette and said, "Let's have another drink."

"No, you've had enough. What do you want another for?"

"Because I need it after what I've been through the last week."

"What have you been through?"

She told him then of the visit to Jellapore, and as she talked her own natural high spirits began to take the place of the gin she had been drinking all day long. The story of the whole visit, made suddenly without any planning, now seemed funny to her, and as she talked and her spirits rose, she began to make of it an excellent story. The boycott of the Jellapore women, the party where the English boys kicked over the pots of orchids, even the story told her by Mrs. Goswami of the attempt to poison her became a joke. It was over now; it went under the head of experience. She was never one to live in the past, or the future either. The present, minute to minute, was everything.

This was how Bill liked her. This was why he had run off with her long ago to rouse a parson in Greenwich at two in the morning to marry them. It wasn't because either of them was much in love with the other; it was because they had fun together. Even their love-making had been punctuated by laughs. None of your Tristan and Isolde stuff.

When she was like this she became more beautiful. Drinking always subtracted something from her charm, for her charm was that of great health and high spirits which allowed her to stay up all night and appear the next day after two or three hours of sleep as fresh as a milkmaid.

And as he listened, laughing now and then at the absurd improbability of the whole story, a line of worry crept in between the blue eyes. "If only she could stay like this," he thought, "forever." He didn't like the drinking nor the shadow of weariness he had noticed earlier in the evening. And he didn't like that plump little man with the funny name and skinny hands.

Then she told of waking up on the train not knowing where she was or how she got there, and then about the axle cracking and about the choice she had made between traveling in a purdah carriage or with a missionary.

"Never a dull moment in India," she said. "There's always something going wrong. But the missionary was sort of nice—and good-looking. It wasn't as bad as I thought it was going to be. But he was awfully ill and I had to look after him. I felt awfully sorry for him. He said anyway he wasn't a real missionary. He did something in the villages—about crops and breeding stock and things like that."

Then Bill found a new interest. He listened a little longer and then asked suddenly, "What was his name?"

"He told me but I don't remember. It was . . . Homer, I think, a barber shop name . . . Homer something. I can't remember the rest."

"I think I know him. He went to school with me. Was his name Homer Merrill?"

"Merrill? Yes, that's it. Well, I'll be damned!"

"He was a swell football player—used to play halfback. He belonged to the same fraternity. He was my roommate for two years."

"You never brought him to New York."

"He didn't lead that kind of life. He wasn't a Christer, but he just went his own way. Couldn't afford it, for one thing, and wouldn't let anybody pay for him."

He saw Homer again suddenly, big and good-looking and clean. That was it—clean. He was the cleanest fellow he had ever known.

Sometimes, the sight of Homer used to make him feel ashamed, as if he needed a spiritual bath. It wasn't that Homer ever said anything; he was just a fact—honest and good and clean with a humorous twinkle in the clear blue eyes, working his way through school and always worrying about the good of mankind. He even grudged the time consumed by football, but he had a scholarship for that, which helped him through school. And now he was in Bombay after ten years of working among Indian villages. The good-humored, kindly eyes of the missionary woman on the boat returned for an instant—yes, that was it: they were eyes exactly like Homer's—the eyes of someone who wouldn't condemn you and always stood ready to help. Now he knew why they had seemed familiar.

"How was he sick?" Bill asked. "What was the matter with him?"

"Liver, he said, and climate. A lot of other things I should think."

"Where was he going in Bombay?"

"I don't know. He mentioned some doctor friend. That's all I know."

So he was lost again. It wasn't easy to find somebody in Bombay who was outside the circle—who didn't live on Malabar Hill and go to the Yacht Club, the Willingdon Club, the Taj Mahal and the races. The needle in the haystack was simple by comparison.

His mind, wandering away from Carol, began to speculate where he could find Homer. It might be that money would help him; at any rate it could get him proper doctors and maybe send him away for a rest.

"Haven't you any idea where he was going to stay?" he asked.

"No, I guess it was with some Indian. An Indian met him—a good-looking Indian about thirty-five or forty with big black eyes. He didn't like me much."

The crowd in the hot room had begun to thin a little. Bill looked about him and said, "You know, I think bed would do you more good than a drink."

"I couldn't sleep yet."

"That's a bad habit to get into."

She didn't answer him and he said, "You're not taking things, are you?"



"No, I'm not that much of a damned fool."

"You might go to bed and try to sleep."

"It's no good, but I'll go if you want to. Is there racing tomorrow?"

"No, not till Saturday."

"Will you take me?"

"Sure."

"What's running?"

"I don't know. I don't know anything about Bombay horses."

She was tired suddenly. Dark circles came under her eyes and little tired lines around the lovely mouth. He thought, "She's going to age quickly—all at once—if she keeps on. At thirty-five with luck she'll be a well-preserved blonde and nothing is harder than a well-preserved blonde." He felt a quick desire to help her, but could think of no way. It seemed to him that somewhere in the course of her destiny she had come on to the wrong track. It was like the spectacle of a good actress playing the wrong rôle. Something was wasted—energy, purpose, design—what it was he could not discover. He was a little tipsy now and all the shock and heat and bad luck of the whole day made itself felt, suddenly, all at once.

"I don't want to be rude, honey," he said, "but if I don't go to bed, I'm going to fall asleep."

"Getting middle-aged?"

"Mebbe. Anyway, aside from the fact that I've had a lousy day, my staying up days are finished. I began the day by seeing a man killed right by my side. My trousers were spotted with blood. I had to throw the suit away."

A faint look of interest came into her blue eyes. "What happened?" she asked. "Tell me and I'll go to bed."

He told her with apathy and weariness, for he was too tired now to recapture the sense of shock and horror. When he had finished she said, "That's a funny woman—your friend Mrs. Trollope."

"She's all right."

She rose suddenly, "We'd both better go to bed."

"I'll go with you as far as your room."

"You don't need to."

"I'd like to."

He paid the check and tipped the Eurasian waiter, and then as

they moved between the crowded tables, he felt someone staring at him and turning, he saw that it was the plump man with the skinny hands. He started to speak to him and then thought better of it and kept silent.

Outside they descended the stairs to the lift, and as they passed the clock he noticed that it was already three in the morning. Then as he looked up he saw the figure of the Baroness seated heavily in a wicker chair. She was watching the crowd, the beads of the wooden rosary slipping swiftly through her fat fingers. She did not see them, and he thought, "If only we can get to the lift without her noticing us."

But immediately, as if she felt their presence, she turned and saw them. That was enough. She was out of her chair and coming toward them, her face contorted in what was for her the nearest approach to a smile.

"Vell," she said, "I've been vondering where you vere all day."

"I've had a lot of business to get through."

"It vas horrible—the axident." She grinned faintly with sadistic enjoyment of the memory.

"Yes."

She looked at Carol and smiled. Bill knew she wanted to be introduced and for once in his life he was rude, but being rude to the Baroness was only like being rude to an inquisitive rhinoceros.

She said, holding out her hand, "I am Baroness Stefani. Ve come oud togedder on de boat—Mr. Vainwright and I."

"I'm sorry," said the routed Bill. "This is Miss Halma."

Carol said, "Glad to know you."

"You go to bed alreddy?" asked the Baroness. "I vould invite you to a drink."

"Thanks," said Bill. "Another time . . . tomorrow you have a drink with us."

"And tomorrow like today I not see you."

"We're tired," said Carol.

"Vell then, tomorrow I hold you to your promise."

"Good-night."

"Good-night."

They turned away to the lift and the Baroness went back to her wicker chair and the fingering of her beads. It was late but she was

enjoying herself watching the crowd. Her beady eyes saw everything; they were trained for that; loneliness and greed had trained them. And she was satisfied she had met the showy blonde girl who might be of use to her. She had already confirmed what her instinct and experience had told her—that the girl had been on the stage.

A little later, a small thin man, sinister in appearance with shifty eyes and rather shabbily dressed, came in and sat by her. They talked for a long time, earnestly, while the beads lay still in the wide lap of the Baroness, until even in the big hall of the Taj Mahal, very few people remained.

Upstairs Bill and Carol walked the long stone balcony past all the sleeping bearers and when they reached her room, she said, "Do you want to come in and talk?"

"No, I think we'll talk tomorrow."

For a moment she hesitated, then she said, "You could stay if you liked."

"No, I think it's better not . . . it's not because I don't want to, honey. Only it's no use beginning all over again. Get what I mean?"

She looked away from him. "Yes . . . maybe you're right. I only thought we'd get some laughs." Then she turned and looked at him—the girl he liked, the daughter of the big Swedish farmer from Minnesota. "Anyway," she said, "I'm glad you turned up. I needed somebody like you. You can chaperone me. Anyway," she added, "kiss me good-night."

She kissed him and it was a chaste and almost sisterly kiss. That was the odd thing about her—that despite everything, she had a kind of purity, a naïveté which nothing had ever destroyed. She was healthy and normal and nice. God had given her everything. And again Bill for an instant had the feeling of her having gotten on the wrong track somewhere early in life.

When he had gone back to his own room, the kiss troubled him, not because he desired her, but because he felt that somehow he had helped to change her destiny. If he had been a different sort of guy, the marriage might have been a success—a healthy, honest-to-God marriage. There was no reason why it shouldn't have been,

except that there were too many people, too many parties, too many bright lights, too much nonsense.

When he was undressed and lying on the hard iron bed with the *punkah* churning the hot damp air above his head, he remained awake, troubled, for a long time, and at last, half-asleep he thought, "Maybe, after all, I am my old man's son. Maybe the old boy is beginning to claim me." And he remembered the old saying, "Nothing is more respectable than a reformed rake."

In her room, Carol did not sleep. She lay in the darkness, trying desperately to sleep but sleep would not come. Somehow, without her knowing it, her life had become strange and befuddled. She no longer slept at night but in the daytime. She did not know where she would be a year hence, or a month, or even tomorrow, and that, now that she was alone and her soul as naked as her body, troubled and frightened her. That was why she had asked him to stay with her, not because she was in love with him any longer, but because if he had been there beside her, she would not have been thinking of herself. They could have talked of old times and even laughed. He was a nice boy, she thought, nice as only American men can be, chivalrous and humorous and kind—too kind and good-humored perhaps. That had very nearly ruined him. And the old name for him returned to her—"Good-time Charlie"—and she felt a wave of warmth and affection for him.

But almost at once the night terrors assailed her again, creeping out from the shadows of the big room. Voices out of her own brain, beyond her control, kept talking to her. "You are afraid. You have made a mess of everything. You have nowhere to go. You are nearly broke. You have spent all the money Bill settled on you. You are beginning to drink in earnest. Soon you'll be taking drugs to sleep. You can't go back. You can't go home to your mother in a little house in Minneapolis. You know too much. You've gone too far. It wouldn't work. You know that better than anyone. Now, when you get up at noon your eyes aren't clear as they always used to be, in spite of everything. Your skin isn't clean and fresh any more. You have to drink to fight off the terrors. You'll get up even now and have another drink so you can sleep."

And aloud to the voices she said, "I won't! I won't! You can't make me."

But the voices kept on and at last when it was nearly dawn, she rose in the faint grey light and went to the drawer where she had hidden the gin bottle from the sight of Krishna and took a long drink, straight from the bottle.

When Mrs. Trollope left to find the big Rolls in the line outside the Taj, the driver was half-asleep and sulky and insolent. When she said, "Back to the palace," he only scowled at her without speaking at all and when she climbed in he slammed the door and Mrs. Trollope thought, "He knows too."

She knew that to the servants in the palace she was only a poor relation. She knew the East. She knew that even if she strained her purse to tip well, it would make no difference and give her no face. They *knew* by the state of her clothes and the shabby Vuitton luggage bought fifteen years ago when Jim Trollope was on the crest of the wave, by the look in her eye, even by the brazenness she had developed to give herself confidence. But the driver was a Ghurka too, so it might only be his evil temper. Why her sister had Ghurkas about her, she could never understand. They were treacherous, ill-tempered, stubborn, proud and contemptuous. She could not imagine why unless it was because the Maharajah had always had them and she hadn't the power or the courage to send them away. The small round Mongol faces always seemed to her full of evil and hatred for anyone—Hindu or Moslem or Burmese or European—simply because he was not a Ghurka.

Leaning back against the cushions, she felt limp now and utterly exhausted and on the verge of self-pity. At forty-two in the very midst of life she was defeated, with nothing before her but desolation and dreariness; and for the first time she experienced the awful exhaustion which is born of perpetually putting up a front, and the awful loneliness which the pretense created about you. She was weary of pretending to waiters, to fellow passengers, to that bullet-headed Ghurka on the driver's seat, even to her own sister, that she was not at the end of her resources. It destroyed even the pleasure she had once had in gambling; when you had to gamble for a living, to pay your passage and buy your dinner, it wasn't

fun any longer. And it wasn't even as if she could look forward to anything when Jim Trollope came out of jail. If he had anything hidden away out of the wreckage of the swindle, she wouldn't be likely to share in it. And at sixty when he came out, he would be a broken man, too old to begin over again. She didn't mind the disgrace; her hide was tough enough for that. (She hadn't even lived or traveled under a false name in all those years since the scandal.) But she did mind the prospect of the sordidness and the scrimping, the bitterness of having to calculate the price of a joint or a cheap cut, of eating always in a cheap restaurant. For she knew what that was; it wasn't as if she hadn't known. It was easier if you had never known poverty; then you might hope that perhaps it would be an adventure. But she *knew* there was nothing adventurous about poverty.

The big car turned off the road along the sea and rolled heavily up the flowering avenue. In one of the big bungalows there was a party under way; the jazz music filled the scented air and through the gateway she had a glimpse of the verandah and a garden hung with lanterns, of red and black coats and women in dowdy evening dress . . . And then in the sickening wave of loneliness which followed, she wished that she had not looked at all. She belonged to no community, to no life; she had no place anywhere. Once she had scorned people like the people at that party, small people absorbed in the life of their own small world, dull and unadventurous and smug. Now she envied them. Since the days she and Nelly left Melbourne to go to school in England on her father's ill-gotten gains, she had had no roots. Her father had hoped to make ladies out of Nelly and herself and look how the damned thing had ended—Nelly, a kind of luxurious prisoner in a pink marble palace with an allowance not much bigger than the pension of an Army officer, and herself the penniless wife of a jail-bird. All her life she had lived in hotels, wandering here and there, for a time when things were going well with Jim, in the greatest luxury. Of all that there remained only memories, and barren ones at that, hardly worth recalling. There wasn't any use asking Nelly to help her. Her sister would only say that she didn't have a cent over what she needed for her gambling, which was probably true despite all the soft female luxury in which she lived. Now that she was a

dowager Maharani they probably allowed her only pin money, because the Dewan and the State hadn't liked the marriage any better than the English had liked it. But Nelly didn't seem to mind; she hadn't that awful curse of restlessness on her; she was like a soft golden Persian cat, getting fatter and fatter, sitting all day like a houri playing bridge or mahjong, occasionally going to the races in a lace hat like a superannuated trollop, just to gamble. Nelly didn't even seem to mind no longer going to Paris, so long as she had champagne and bon-bons in Bombay.

Then she forgot about Nelly and began thinking of herself again. With forty-eight pounds in the bank and a small credit at Cook's and Jim in Brixton jail for another four years, there wasn't much ahead of her. She couldn't even get out of Bombay. There wasn't anything left to sell that anyone would buy. Nothing before her but board and lodging in her sister's pink, whorehouse palace, given grudgingly because after all Nelly really hated her; and the insolence of Oriental servants who knew that she was stony broke.

And then like light bursting into a dark room came the memory of the girl Bill had brought to the table. The health and radiance of her bloneness drove off the loneliness a little. She thought, "If only I had been born like that—tall and beautiful and full of vitality instead of dumpy and sallow and masculine."

Then an extraordinary thing happened to her. For a sudden brief and dazzling moment, she *became* the girl, radiant and reckless. It was as if her own skinny legs became long and beautiful, as if her own flat breasts had turned round and firm and voluptuous, as if her own sallow leathery skin had become clear and transparent, her own vague muddy green eyes had become blue and clear with a glint of good humor in them.

And then the moment passed quickly and left her shrunken and dry again, her life filled with an aching boredom and despair as if the experience had had a physical reality. Tipsily she thought, "I must see her again. I'll give her a ring tomorrow."

And then the big old-fashioned Rolls Royce was standing before the ornate *porte cochère* of the palace, and the Ghurka driver was holding the door open staring at her scornfully like a dog contemptuous of a drunken master. She tottered out of the car and up the steps. Until she reached the vulgar pink marble stairway she

managed to control herself, but as she started up the stairs she began to cry, sobbing hysterically until she reached her own room and threw herself down on the bed. In the morning she was still there, sleeping in the rumpled white suit.

Major Moti went with Merrill and his son to the boat. Merrill hadn't wanted him to go, but Moti insisted, although it ruined his whole day and took him away from his beloved laboratory. The Indian, with the over-acute sensibility and intuition which makes life a misery to so many of his race, knew that Merrill wasn't only a sick and suffering man but that the departure of the boy caused a slow keen agony in his heart and brain.

All the way to the pier in the heat of the rattling taxi, he watched the tired face of Merrill, cautiously, so that Merrill would not be put on his guard and withdraw into himself. Now, suffering, the man made no effort to conceal anything while Moti struggled to get beneath the surface and achieve an understanding of what went on inside the soul and mind of his friend. It was not the first time he had attempted it; but never once had he wholly succeeded. Something always remained hidden—that thing which somehow twisted the whole existence of Merrill, which harmed his work and ruined his health—that thing, so difficult for Moti to understand—which came out of the West, out of some small town in upper New York State, out of all that Merrill's childhood and early life had been—that something which Moti and no Indian would ever fully understand. It was something, Moti knew with his shrewd mind, which ran against nature, which was indeed a kind of perversion of nature. It was, he knew, something which would have to be plucked out before Merrill could be cured. An operation was necessary; the thing might have to be cut out, like a malignant tumor. But first, he knew, he must find out what it was.

They reached the pier at last and found Mr. Snodgrass, the missionary, waiting to take the small boy in charge for the rest of the long trip to Minneapolis. Snodgrass was a tall, thin, unsympathetic man. Moti disliked him at once and thought, "Luckily the boy isn't old enough to have his mind corrupted by that man's moral ideas." It was people like Snodgrass, Moti suspected, who long ago had



planted in Merrill the seed of that disease which had thrown his whole life out of balance and helped to ruin his health.

It wasn't that Mr. Snodgrass was actively malignant. He was amiable enough in a tight-lipped almost professional way; it was the lips that Moti hated on sight, lips that were thin, smug and cold. It was almost as if the cadaverous man had no lips at all. The very sight of the missionary suddenly roused a fierce rage in the fiery-eyed Indian. This man, who had no warmth in him nor any fire, and knew nothing of love or even of charity, deemed himself worthy to set himself up to judge others scornfully. Watching the hairy hands that never moved but hung inertly by his side, listening to the cold, thin, precise voice while he talked with Merrill of arrangements for the boy, Moti thought, "That's what is in Merrill's background. It was something like that which has twisted his life."

The boy, excited by the ship and the prospect of the voyage, ran about the deck, unmoved by the prospect of the separation from his father. Coming out of the jungle, out of the villages, all this was to him a new and exciting world, far more wonderful than the Maharajah's elephants or the monsoon or the tigers which occasionally came down among the villages slaying cattle and sometimes men at night. And he had never seen water like this which seemed to go on and on further than the great flat plain of the high Deccan. He forgot too his friend Ali, left behind with Colonel Moti's serene wife. He forgot that Ali, sitting there alone in the bungalow trying to listen, was blind and could not see such wonders as this great ship. He forgot his father and the villages and the wild beauty and excitement of the upland country. Because he was going home—home to America, home to Minnesota where there would be other boys like himself and where everybody spoke American, where perhaps there were cowboys and coyotes and redskins.

While the boy ran about peering over the side, calling out and asking questions, Merrill watched him with hungry eyes, not hearing the commonplace conversation of Moti and Mr. Snodgrass. It was the terrible concentration on the boy that troubled Moti, as if Merrill were trying to capture and fix forever in his memory, each gesture and intonation, as if such small things were treasures

to be locked away and carried back with him when he returned alone among the villages.

And Merrill, silent, his face gray with weariness and pain, trying to betray no emotion either to Snodgrass or his friend Moti, had his own thoughts.

Through his tired head, vague, disconnected thoughts and memories swept round and round. It seemed odd to him that he should feel so much love for a child born of a marriage so colorless, so cramped, so stifled as his had been. Now, in his illness, he no longer pretended to deceive himself as he had done while she was still alive. With his brain beaten by the heat and illness, all the deceiving, the pretense, the self-deceptions, which had made all those years endurable and lent to them the semblance of dignity, were gone. Maybe he loved the boy so much because the mother had given him no love, nor even permitted him to love her.

Whistles had begun to blow and there were cries of "all ashore." And the crowd all about him, dark and fair, European and Indian, garlanded and having their farewell drinks, began to dissolve, flowing in a little stream down the narrow gangplank.

Mr. Snodgrass was saying with an air of pompous authority, "Yes, I imagine it will be hot all the way to Port Said. But after that it will be cool, even cold perhaps. It is remarkable the sudden change that happens at Port Said."

And Merrill suddenly hated Mr. Snodgrass who, until now, had merely annoyed him. He hated him with a sudden sickening violence born of shredded nerves, for his pomposity, his unctuousness, his hypocrisy, the certainty that he was God's anointed and so, superior to other men.

He thought, "But maybe he can't help it. But for the grace of God, I might be Mr. Snodgrass."

He turned to the boy and suddenly picked him up in his arms, wondering at how chunky and healthy and heavy he was for a child brought up in India, how very like himself at the same age, with that chunkiness which later on would turn into hard muscle and make of him a fighter and a football player (all that seemed so long ago, hundreds of years ago). If he had taken Bill's father's offer of a job, it all might have been different. He might now be living in America with the boy growing up beside him. It was all those years,

when that chunkiness was turning into muscle that he would miss—the years when he might be able to help the boy and steer him clear of the mistakes he himself had made, to help him to know how to live with joy, even with abandon, before it was too late to learn. When he saw him again—if he ever saw him again—Tommy would be almost a man who perhaps would be a stranger.

He gave the boy a hug and said, "Well, sonny, be a good boy and when you get home write to me. You might even write to me from the boat on the way home."

"Sure, Dad. Sure, I will."

The cries of "all ashore" grew louder. And Moti, watching with his brilliant black eyes, feeling everything with his own sensitive nerves said, "We'd better go, Homer."

Merrill put the boy down and shyly kissed the top of his head. When he saw him again he would be too big a fellow to kiss. Then Moti took his arm. He shook hands with Snodgrass. (Thank God, Snodgrass wouldn't be with the boy long enough to do him any harm.)

And then somehow in the heat and confusion of cries and sounds and smells, he was going down the gangplank with Moti behind him. He felt suddenly ill and filled with fears that he might collapse there on the pier among all these strange people. The pain in the top of his head was coming back again and he heard Moti saying, "Better go home and get to bed. You don't want to stay here and watch the boat sail. That will only make it worse." He turned to look for the boy but Tommy had gone from the rail somewhere inside the ship to discover new marvels.

Merrill said ruefully, "I guess he is pretty jungly. I suppose it's all wonderful to him—more wonderful than anything."

At two o'clock in the afternoon Bill telephoned to Carol. In spite of the heat which crept in everywhere, she sounded restored and quite fresh. It wasn't the somewhat nervy, hoarse voice he had heard on the night before in the bar, but the old rather golden, lush, fresh voice. His own head ached and his nerves jangled.

When she said, "Oh, hello, honey. How're you feeling?" a wave of irritation came over him. He thought, "Damn her good health and spirits!"

"Pretty good. What are you doing?"

"Nothing. Just lying here dressed like Eve reading Nash's magazine. It's too hot to do anything else."

"I've got to go out."

"Where?"

"The company office."

"What about the races?"

"I don't know when I'll get away. I might join you there."

The rather lush voice grew a little more lush, "Oh, come on. You've just arrived. Take the afternoon off."

It was the old story. It had always been like that. Business wasn't anything to her. All she wanted was a good time, a laugh and a spectacle and the sense of people around her.

"Listen, honey," he said, "I came all the way out here just to work."

"There won't be any races tomorrow."

"Okay, but when will I see you?"

"I'll turn up at the races or at the Willingdon Club."

"Don't be too late."

"No."

"You aren't sorry I turned up?"

"No, why should I be?"

"Well, I've never been a very good influence on a business man."

He laughed, "You're up against a tough guy now, honey. 'Good-time Charlie' is dead."

"It's a pity. Poor guy."

Then suddenly the conversation dried up. He was silent and in a moment her voice came back. "Are you still there?"

"Yes."

"I thought maybe you had hung up."

She would never be the one to hang up. She loved the telephone. She could lie in bed a whole morning doing nothing but talk on the telephone.

He said, "Tell me again about that guy on the train. Where did he say he was going to stay?"

"With some Indian—some kind of a doctor who was head of something."

"What did he look like?"

"He was a small fellow—very good-looking with wonderful black eyes."

"I don't mean the Indian."

"Oh, the American guy! Good-looking, sympathetic. Blonde hair and blue eyes. He was sweet really. A girl could fall for him."

"I guess that was him all right."

"Who?"

"Merrill—Homer Merrill."

"Yes, that was it. I remember now."

"It's a good thing you sober up once in a while."

"Don't make cracks."

"Well, I'll be seeing you."

"Yeah—at the races or at the Club."

"Do you belong?"

"Me—no. Botlivala fixes it up for me."

"Who's Botlivala—that Indian?"

"Yes."

"And Jelly and his brother are very important there."

"I prefer Jelly to your friend."

"Well, you can take your choice. Remember, you've got to get me disengaged from him."

"Sure. You can count on me."

"Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

He left the telephone and had a shower. Then he opened the door and called to Silas and told him to lay out his clothes. While he dressed, he thought about Merrill. Surely it must be Merrill she'd met in such a strange fashion on the train. The thought occurred to him again that Merrill might need money if he was ill. He knew you couldn't *give* him any money, unless he had changed a good deal since his college days. But he might be willing to accept a loan. He experienced a strong desire to see Merrill, a desire he had known before many times, when he was tired and felt soiled from dissipation. You always felt better after you'd been with him. Funny—you felt that way too after being with Carol—it had something to do with their health and vitality. They were the kind of people that others of less vitality, of less health, imposed upon, feeding off them. They both drew to themselves weaker, less at-

tractive people, people who were in bad luck or had made a mess of their lives. Merrill was born to accept responsibilities and to help people and lead them. In a funny way that was true of her too, only somehow she had missed her destiny. He'd never thought of her in that way before. Maybe it was that beauty contest long ago that had started her off on the wrong foot. "Miss Minnesotal" That was it. And then Ziegfeld and all the rest of it. She had gotten on to the wrong track. And it was too late now to get her back on the right one.

He thought, grinning, "I guess that puts me in the vampire class, being a good friend of both of them." And then, in seriousness, he realized for the first time that they were the two persons who had been nearest to him. He had loved them both, in much the same way. Looking back on it now, he saw that there was never much desire mixed up in his feeling for Carol. He had felt more lecherous about a dozen other women he had known, almost any other woman he had ever known well, even about women who, aside from their sleek bodies, bored him.

Outside, the heat rose up off the streets like heat from the top of an oven. This was the kind of day you wanted to spend at the beach lying in the water up to your neck, only you couldn't do that here. If you went to Juhu the water, for all the beauty of the shore and the coconut palms, would be warm and muddy. It wasn't much better than the heat itself.

At the office, they hadn't expected him. The *chuprassi* returned after a moment followed by Mr. Smithers, the head man when Mr. Hinkle was away. Mr. Smithers was a rather plump middle-aged man with steel-rimmed spectacles and a shiny bald head, a new man since Bill had been here last. He kept smiling effusively and making little bows, and the moment he spoke Bill recognized him as the man who had talked to him over the telephone. It was the same Birmingham voice and the same rather groveling manner.

The servility of the English lower classes always embarrassed him, as the arrogance and bad manners of the upper classes irritated him. He wanted to say, "Listen, Mr. Smithers, we're both men. We don't belong to two different orders of the animal kingdom. I'm not going to fire you. Even if I am the son of the boss it doesn't

make me God. You probably are a hell of a sight more important to the business than I am." This kind of thing always left him tongue-tied, but he knew that if he tried to force Mr. Smithers into behaving with some sort of human dignity as an equal, it would only upset Mr. Smithers and make him believe that the son of his overlord was simply vulgar and American.

They went into Mr. Smithers' office, a somewhat dingy, old-fashioned room with an antiquated electric fan, heavy teakwood furniture and half a dozen fly-specked maps adorning the liver-colored walls. He thought, "I see what Hinkle meant when he wrote for eighty thousand rupces to do over the whole office. This looks like something out of the Temple." It wasn't any office for a company as big as theirs—especially now that all the other American firms in Bombay had launched out into marble and *art moderne*.

He said, "I see what Hinkle meant about the offices. They ought to be brought up to date."

Mr. Smithers clapped his hands and said in a rather meek fashion, "I'm very comfortable, sir. I like my office. It's dignified, too."

"Yes," said Bill. "It's rather like the British Empire under a Tory government." Mr. Smithers looked shocked and tried painfully to smile at the same time with appreciation of the irreverent joke he did not understand.

In response to a clap of the hands a *chuprassie* appeared, and Mr. Smithers ordered hot tea.

Then he said, "I'm sorry Mr. Hinkle is away. I don't think he expected you until next month."

"Well, I finished everything in Alexandria and Istanbul sooner than I expected. I don't like either place, so I caught a boat two weeks earlier than I expected at Port Said."

"Well, you must let us do all we can to make your stay comfortable. I suppose you don't know Bombay very well."

Bill laughed, "On the contrary, I know it very well. You see, I've been here before. You weren't here then."

"No, I was transferred only a year ago from the Singapore office." He rubbed his hands together and beamed with satisfaction and good humor. "Anyway, you must come to lunch with me at the

Yacht Club." He seemed to swell suddenly, and added, "I've just been taken in."

Bill wasn't unkind or rude by nature, but now he struck. "I appreciate your kind invitation," he said, "but I never go to the Yacht Club. I've never been inside it."

Mr. Smithers looked alarmed. "Why not, Mr. Wainwright? Surely it's a fine club."

"It isn't that. Only you see I have a good many Indian friends—some of them very distinguished—and as you know, they are not allowed to enter the club. So I don't go either . . . it seems to me rather odd considering that India is *their* country."

The speech threw Mr. Smithers into such confusion that Bill regretted having made it. Mr. Smithers grew scarlet and said, "Yes, I know, it's unfortunate. You have to live out here to understand. It's absolutely necessary. We'd be over-run."

Thinking of a club filled with scores of Smithers, Bill thought, "It might be a good thing, too." But he held his tongue, and the unfortunate *impasse* was broken by the arrival of the *chuprassi* with the tea. He drank a cup out of politeness and promptly broke out into a violent sweat, thinking, "Now, damn it, I'll have to go back and change again before I go to the races."

Aloud he said, "There's a bit of information I want to ask you. I am trying to find a friend here. All I know is that he's staying with an Indian doctor, very well known. The doctor is the head of some kind of institution. I know it sounds very vague but I can't come any nearer to it than that. It's very important that I find him."

Mr. Smithers was clearly glad to be off the subject of the Bombay Yacht Club. He said, "I wouldn't know myself. I'll call the head *babu*."

Again the *chuprassi* appeared and went to summon Mr. Das, the head *babu*.

Mr. Das was an elderly Bengali, very neatly dressed in European clothes, but his manner, like Mr. Smithers', was at once gushy and servile. When Bill described the man he was seeking, Mr. Das, rubbing his hands together, said, "Of course, that must be Colonel Moti." His Bunya face brightened and he added, "A great man—a very great man—a light in India!"



"Where can I find him?" asked Bill.

"At the Institute of Tropical Diseases." And Mr. Das described the way. "It is a bad section of the city—very full of mill workers and diseases."

Then with meticulous care, in Spencerian penmanship, Mr. Das wrote the name of Colonel Moti and the address of the Institute of Tropical Diseases. And all the time Mr. Smithers, Bill was aware, was watching them, a little bewildered by Bill's behavior and point of view, thinking no doubt that Americans were crazy and unpredictable and that their manners, rather than the stupidity and avarice of Tory politicians, would eventually wreck all white civilization; but at the same time Bill was the son of his boss, and he was American, and Mr. Smithers was paid a lot more for his job than any English firm would have paid him, and the Americans had a way of taking business from English corporations. So, Mr. Smithers, knowing which was the buttered side of his bread, took it all. He didn't even hate Bill; he tried to feel superior and contemptuous but only ended in feeling bewildered.

Mr. Das, still rubbing his hands, backed out of the room smiling and bowing, and when he had gone Bill said, "I wish he wouldn't treat a simple request for information as if it were a ceremony."

Mr. Smithers said, "They're all like that—Indians—always servile." And then when Bill asked for a bit of paper to write a note, Mr. Smithers produced it and laid it before him with the air of a grateful serf preparing a service for his feudal overlord.

Bill wrote a note to Colonel Moti and as he wrote, the figure of the small scientist became a little clearer to him, emerging dimly out of his memory—a tough, indignant little figure, which had appeared so incredibly out of place one evening ten years ago in the big bar of the Taj Mahal. He remembered the spirit in the fiery black eyes and the beauty of the Rajput slippers the Major wore. They were scarlet and gold.

He wrote:

My dear Colonel Moti:

I am writing to you for information regarding an old friend of mine, Homer Merrill, who, I understand, is also a friend of yours. I am in Bombay for a very short time and very eager to see him before leaving. If you could give me his address, I should be very

grateful. You doubtless do not remember me—we met for one evening at the Taj Mahal nearly ten years ago. A note will reach me there.

With best wishes and apologies for troubling you, I am,

Yours faithfully,

William Wainwright

Then he asked Mr. Smithers to send a boy with the note and left. Outside the street was still like an oven. His clothes hung against his skin, sticky and miserable. It was after four o'clock. He thought, "I'll have to change before going to the races. It will be growing cooler now and by the time I've had a shower and changed, it won't be so bad."

But his instinct told him that he should go to the races, and as he drove back to the hotel, he began, for no special reason, to be troubled again about Carol. He had the feeling that if he did not keep his eye on her, and now and then pull her up short, she would get into trouble. He knew her, and he knew when her mood became dangerous. She was that way now, reckless and wild, and capable of any folly, and it was worse now because she seemed so disorganized and drifting. Miserable and depressed by the heat, it seemed to him as the ramshackle taxi approached the Taj Mahal, that she was headed straight for catastrophe—what catastrophe he did not know.

And he thought, "What the hell! I can't go on looking after her for the rest of my life!" Anyway, why should he? Simply because for a few months they had been married and had fun.

But the sense of trouble did not go away. It remained with him while he had a tepid shower and changed out of the clothes soaked by the reaction to Mr. Smithers' cup of hot tea. When he left he told Silas to return at eight o'clock to see whether he was needed. He did not know what he meant to do. It was a pleasant feeling—Mr. Smithers and the office were out of the way. Until Mr. Hinkle came back from Burma he could do as he pleased. He could have any sort of adventure. "Maybe," he thought, "it's the last chance I'll ever have."

At the race course Mr. Botlivala was suffering from an accession of pride. He walked as if treading on air and his plump little chest

was thrown out like the breast of a pouter pigeon. Now and then when he passed an acquaintance or a friend, he bowed rather too elegantly, and a smug little smile curled the corners of the cruel and sensuous lips. He had good reason for feeling proud. Except for his liver, his health was good. He was rich. It was only one generation since his family name had been Bottlewallah, and only four or five since his family had any name at all. And now he had a big pink house on Malabar Hill and owned hundreds of acres of mill tenements and had money invested in foreign stocks that were booming and a string of race horses. But what made him prouder than any of those things was the knowledge that at his side, dressed in Paris clothes and wearing far too many jewels, was the most beautiful blonde in the whole of India. That she was a good deal taller than himself and made no concessions did not trouble him. It was enough that he created the impression that this radiant creature was his property. That this was not true did not trouble him; that even in his heart he knew there was little chance of its ever being true was at that moment of small importance to him. The mere sight of her at his side would start whispers that Botlivala had got possession of that big and wonderful American blonde; and Mr. Botlivala himself did nothing to destroy the impression. On the contrary, he managed by a curl of the lips and a sly look in the eye to say to passing friends and acquaintances, "Look what I got this time."

So, Mr. Botlivala, walking about, now in the paddock, now in the Racing Club enclosure, now having drinks in the enclosure of his own club, was stepping high, his Parsce blood circulating through the veins of his plump little body more quickly than usual, not because of desire but from pride.

And the whole spectacle of the races made him feel fine. It was the showiest race course in the world, better than Longchamps or Epsom, better than Peking or even St. Petersburg in the old days. Nowhere but in Bombay did you find all this color, moving against a background of tropical flowers—nowhere did you find Maharajahs and millionaires, Ranees and British governors, rich Americans and Arab horse dealers, visiting French and beautiful Indian women. The scene was not new to him but it was always fresh, and he was always proud of it. He liked showing it to all newcomers

as he was showing it now to Carol. He liked showing it to her even though she had seen it many times before. He liked showing it to her and telling her all about it, even if she was bored.

His horse Asoka III won the fourth race and Carol won money on it. He knew Asoka III was going to win, so it was easy enough to lend her a thousand rupees to bet on it. The only thing he didn't like was that when she had won and drawn twenty-one thousand rupees she promptly paid him back the thousand. She would accept jewelry, but she would never accept money. This, he divined after some weeks of experience with Miss Carol Halma, was a quaint American custom. Jewelry gave you the right to nothing. Money, it seemed, did. So he had never been quite able to get what he wanted, despite the fact that the jewelry had cost him several hundred thousand rupees. But at the moment his regrets were not too bitter; everybody at the races who knew him thought Miss Carol Halma belonged to him, even if she didn't, and except for the baser more depraved side of *l'amour* (as the cosmopolitan Mr. Botlivala always expressed it) that knowledge was half the satisfaction of any conquest. The other thing you could buy in quantity in Bombay with no trouble at all.

He was happy, too, because Carol seemed very good-natured today, and not tricky and quarrelsome as she could be at times. She was very amiable and did not even object to being walked about in the heat like a show filly so that people could see them together.

The race in which Asoka III ran was the big race and after Mr. Botlivala had discussed matters with the trainer and jockey and had a drink at his club enclosure, he began to feel restless again. Virtually everybody he knew had seen him by now with the beautiful blonde, and he experienced a sudden desire to show her to a new audience. The obvious place to go was to the Willingdon Club across the Road. All of Bombay that wasn't at the races would be turning up there for cocktails and a rubber of bridge, and although it was nearly five o'clock the race course was still a hot uncomfortable place. They would go to the Willingdon Club and then perhaps Carol would have a drink too many and he could take her to the Taj Mahal for dinner and show her off there.

But when he turned from talking to one of the race stewards, he found her speaking to an ugly little woman dressed in white whom

she introduced as Mrs. Trollope. Mr. Botlivala bowed—one of his smaller bows reserved for inferiors—and his face took on the expression of someone in proximity to a bad smell. He recognized her vaguely as the woman he had seen the night before in the Taj Mahal bar, but of this he gave no sign. All his agitated little life he had spent in observing people—not profoundly—but only so far as he could judge their value and use to him in his worldly career. Very often because he only observed such superficial details as dress and speech, he had fallen into disastrous errors. (Once he made the awful mistake of taking a British Governor for an inferior civil servant because the Governor liked old clothes.)

So now, in a glance, he took in the worn and slightly yellowed costume and felt hat of Mrs. Trollope and dismissed her, not only as of no importance but actually an object with whom he did not care to be seen. He knew that Miss Carol Halma had a talent for collecting strange people, and he had found her on intimate terms with remittance men, blowsy English tap dancers and God knows what, but Mrs. Trollope was, he thought swiftly, the worst she had produced up to now. Why, she wasn't even a woman and she was ugly.

Like so many weak men, Mr. Botlivala was always talking about beautiful women and always wanting to be seen with them. The proximity of a woman as plain as Mrs. Trollope, even if she had been clothed in diamonds, seemed to him a reproach to the virility which was his greatest concern in life. What would people think? And it was none the easier that she appeared shabby and unimportant. He thought, "Well, we must get rid of her."

But Mrs. Trollope had no intention of being shaken off. She had come to the races, alone, to make money and augment the pitiful forty-eight pounds and three shillings she had left in Barclay's Bank. And she had lost. Her head ached from the drinking of the night before and the heat made her feel dizzy, and the loss of fifteen pounds had terrified her. And then suddenly like a blaze of light she had seen Miss Carol Halma, tall and beautiful in pale pink, covered with diamonds in broad daylight, coming down the steps from the owners' box. Again, this time in the heat and dirt, the queer sensation of becoming Miss Carol Halma swept over her and

went away again, leaving her limp and exhausted. She thought, "She'll bring me luck. I must speak to her."

So she followed Miss Halma and Mr. Botlivala as far as the steward's enclosure and then while Mr. Botlivala was talking she managed to come face to face with Miss Halma and to be recognized.

When Mr. Botlivala, after being introduced said quickly to Carol, "We'll go and have a drink at the Willingdon Club," the response wasn't what he had expected. Surprisingly, Carol said, "No, I want to stay on for the next race. Mrs. Trollope wants to bet." And then Mr. Botlivala saw that Mrs. Trollope held in her hand a thousand rupee note and the awful suspicion came to him that it was one of the notes Carol had won with the thousand rupees he had loaned her.

It was. In the few moments while the two women talked much had been accomplished.

Carol had remembered Mrs. Trollope at once. It was not difficult to recall the small tough, weather-beaten face, and recognition was made all the easier by the fact that Mrs. Trollope was wearing the same costume, sponged and badly pressed by an *ayah*, that she had worn the night before in the Taj Mahal bar. Carol thought, "Maybe the only costume she has." She recognized all the signs of bad luck in Mrs. Trollope, even to the discouraged expression in the greenish eyes which did not vanish when the lips formed themselves into a meager smile. She had seen eyes and lips like that before, which did not function together when commanded to do so. And that Carol knew, out of her instinct and experience, indicated an inner desperation which was terrifying.

When Mrs. Trollope said nervously, "Do you remember me?" Carol, full of kindness and pity, answered almost with eagerness, "Of course I do. How are you?"

"Pretty good."

"Had any luck?"

"No," said Mrs. Trollope.

"I cleaned up."

"Well, I lost everything on every race."

Mrs. Trollope made the statement with such nonchalance and such fierce gayety that Carol divined at once that she *had* lost

everything. Her own bag was stuffed with thousand rupee notes. So she said again, "Well, I cleaned up." She opened the bag and took out a thousand rupee note. "Here, take this and have another try."

"Oh, I couldn't do that," said Mrs. Trollope.

"Go on. Don't be silly. I won a lot of them. If you win you can pay me back. If you don't, you can pay me back the next time you see me."

"I don't like to," said Mrs. Trollope weakly. It was preposterous—accepting money like this from a stranger she had seen but once before in her life. It was something she should never do; but she knew she was going to accept the money. At the pit of her stomach she experienced a sudden weakness at the very sight of it. That thousand rupee note might solve everything. Even if she only doubled it, it would give her a capital. If she won on a ten to one shot, it might solve everything. If she lost, there wasn't any way of paying it back. A little voice kept saying, "But the girl is lucky. She couldn't be anything else. It will bring you luck just to touch that thousand rupee note." It all happened very quickly, in a second, between speeches.

The small, remote voice won. She heard the big, handsome girl saying, "Take it. It'll bring you luck. I'm very lucky today. I can't lose."

She took the note and then said, "Give me a tip. I don't know anything about the horses. I only arrived yesterday."

"I don't either," said Carol. "We'll get a sure thing out of Teeny."

It was at this moment that Mr. Botlivala turned and discovered his blonde beauty talking to what appeared to be a charwoman on an outing in borrowed clothes, and his spine stiffened and a chill came over his effusive manner.

When he said nervously, "We'll go and have a drink at the Willingdon Club," Carol knew what was up and said immediately, "No, we won't—not until Mrs. Trollope bets. I feel lucky today. I'm going to stay until she wins."

He knew her well enough to know by her manner that she was in one of those moods when, if crossed, she would become difficult. He suspected—at times he even knew—that she was not very fond

of him and that she had for him no respect whatever. He knew too that he could do things which would put her off altogether for long periods of time. Everything had gone so well today that almost anything seemed possible. It might even be, he thought wildly, that if her good humor continued, the impression he had labored all afternoon to create, might come to have some basis in reality. Bargaining was in Mr. Botlivala's blood and heritage, and he was prepared now to bargain, this time for something he wanted more than he had ever wanted anything.

So he said, "All right, if you like."

"But," said Carol, "you've got to give Mrs. Trollope a first rate tip, like the ones you've been giving me. Then we'll go after the next race. Go and get a tip. We'll meet you at the thousand rupee booth."

So Mr. Botlivala went off, grumbling a little and yet a little proud of being ordered about by so handsome and spectacular a girl. Anyway, it seemed the best and quickest way to be rid of that nobody in the shabby, expensively cut clothes. As he left them he had meant to go and find a tip that was a sure thing. Then Mrs. Trollope would win and go away satisfied quickly.

But Mr. Botlivala's intricate Oriental brain never functioned simply. He had not gone a dozen paces from his club enclosure before a new idea entered his head. It would be better if this Mrs. Trollope lost altogether. If she won, they might never be rid of her; she might want to celebrate or Carol might invite her to join them. If she lost she would be, from all signs, completely broke. Then they would be rid of her for good. So instead of going for a tip, Mr. Botlivala chatted with a friend or two and was rewarded by various questionable compliments regarding his relations with his companion at the races. After that he went to find Carol and Mrs. Trollope.

They seemed to be getting on very well—much too well for his pleasure. "Mrs. Trollope," he thought, "is the kind of bitch who tries to break up the love affairs of more attractive women. She's the kind of plain woman pretty women go to for advice."

Carol looked as if she were enjoying herself and the tired look of discouragement was gone from the face of Mrs. Trollope. Now there was in her eyes a bedazzled look of admiration which dis-



turbed him and made him angry. Although he could not and did not attempt to fathom the reasons for his fierce resentment, he experienced all the sensations of fury that he might have felt at the sight of a man attempting to take Miss Halma away from him. The anger only heightened the pleasure he took in the plot to ruin Mrs. Trollope.

"I've got it," he said, "you can't lose and it's a twenty to one shot."

"What?" asked Mrs. Trollope.

"It's a horse called Tinker's Dam. They don't know much about her but she's a sure thing."

Mrs. Trollope's worn sallow face turned the color of a tallow candle. Her thin brown hands shook as if she had been seized by a chill. She turned and without a word went to the window marked "*One thousand rupees.*" *On the way she thought, "Maybe I'd better only bet half of it."* But the small voice inside her—the voice which had always ruined her life—again said, "No. Bet it all and clean up." Yet putting the thousand rupee note across the board was like putting a part of her own heart in pawn.

They did not trouble to climb the stairs to the owner's box. The three of them stood on chairs. Tinker's Dam—Number seven—was a small sleek mare with a white forefoot. Beside the others in the race she looked no bigger than a small polo pony. At the sight of her, Mrs. Trollope who knew a good deal about horses, felt her heart contract and Carol who knew nothing about horses thought, "How can that little thing run against those other great big horses?" For a second the shadow of a suspicion crossed her mind and she glanced at Mr. Botlivala, but in the bland dark face there was nothing to be read. He was watching the horses with indifference.

Carol borrowed his glasses and then gave them to Mrs. Trollope.

There were two false starts and then they were off. The sleek little black mare was ahead and at the first turn she increased her lead by another length. Her jockey brought her inside next the fence. He was easy to follow with his scarlet and white jacket and cap. At the next turn she was still ahead. Then a big horse appeared to be gaining but the little mare, like a dryad pursued by a faun, increased her lead.

At this point Carol no longer paid any attention to the race. Unless she fell down, little Tinker's Dam with the white forefoot and pretty mane, couldn't lose. Carol took to watching Mr. Botlivala's face. She saw it contract slowly into a scowl and she heard the wild cries of "Tinker's Dam! Tinker's Dam!" and saw the scowl deepen. Then the race was over and Mrs. Trollope wasn't any longer standing on the chair. She had fallen off it and was sitting on it now, limp with the excitement, the worn white felt hat pushed far back on her head.

Before Carol got down from the chair, she addressed two words to Mr. Botlivala. Now she knew what he had done, and her voice was rich with contempt. She said, "You heel!" Mr. Botlivala cringed, pulled his face together and said, "You see, it wasn't any race at all. She couldn't lose."

Then Mrs. Trollope collected herself and, her face bright with excitement, she thanked Mr. Botlivala again and again, and Carol said, "Yes, something must have gone awfully wrong for her to win."

But Mrs. Trollope didn't hear her. She was already on her way to the paying booth.

"Now we can go to the club," said Mr. Botlivala. Frightened by the sudden ferocity of Miss Halma's contempt, he spoke wistfully, hopefully, pleadingly, but it was no good. Carol only said, "No, we'll wait for Mrs. Trollope and take her along. We'll have a drink to celebrate."

Sometimes Mr. Botlivala's temper betrayed his williness. It did so on this occasion. He threw his racing card violently to the ground and said, "What, that scarecrow!"

Carol remained dangerously calm, and he knew now that she meant to punish him for the shabby trick. She only said, "All right, you run along. We'll go back to the Taj Mahal. Anyway, Bill Wainwright was coming to meet us."

"Who's Bill Wainwright?" asked Mr. Botlivala, and into the opaque dark eyes came a sudden look of anger and suspicion.

When she said, "You saw him with me last night," the look changed to one of outright hatred—the hatred of a small, ill-favored, impotent male for one who was good-looking and virile

and attractive. For a second Mr. Botlivala looked strikingly like one of the Russell vipers in the laboratory of Colonel Moti.

"Who is he?" asked Mr. Botlivala. "Where does he come from?"

Carol chose her words deliberately. She was getting a little weary of Mr. Botlivala and his moods, jealousies, vanity and pettiness. So she said quite casually, "He's an old boy friend of mine. His father is the Amalgamated Oil Companies. And he's plenty rich, honey. He could buy you and all your tenements and never notice it." She started through the crowd saying, "Come on, Mrs. Trollope won't know what has become of us."

Having been the first at the pay window, Mrs. Trollope had already drawn her winnings. They were stuffed away in the worn carry-all bag—twenty beautiful thousand rupee notes. The odd note she held in her hand and at sight of Carol she held it out, saying, "Thanks. You certainly are in luck today . . . a twenty to one shot. Wheel!"

And at the same moment out of the crowd appeared the Maharajah of Jellapore and Joey. The garlands and *puggrees* of the landing were gone, and they were both back in their flamboyant European clothes. Jelly smoked an enormous cigar and Joey was a little tipsy—not drunk but just pleasantly dazed. His dark face wore a vacant and dreamy smile.

It was Carol the Maharajah noticed first. He said, "Well, sweetheart, how are you? You look fine."

Carol said she felt fine.

"I hear you've been in Jellapore with my disreputable brother."

"Yes, for three weeks."

"Have fun?"

"Up and down. You know Jellapore better than I do."

"A bloody dull hole."

Then he greeted his old poker companion Mrs. Trollope, warmly, and spoke to Mr. Botlivala. Mr. Botlivala pressed his hands together and gave one of his bows reserved for royalty, with an extra little bob for the kind of royalty that frequented Long-champs, Ascot and Epsom, and the more expensive night clubs and brothels of Paris.

Then the Maharajah said, "We've met just right. I'm giving a little cocktail party in the small palace—right now, after the races.

I'm going back there now. Can I give any of you a lift? Everybody's coming."

"Okay," said Carol. "We've got our own car."

She didn't consult Mr. Botlivala, but he had no objections. Things had turned out for the best—he could show off Carol at the cocktail party where Mrs. Trollope would doubtless be quickly lost in the crowd.

As for Mrs. Trollope, the world in less than an hour had turned into a different place. She had twenty thousand rupees in her bag and now she was going to a party, a good party, with the big beautiful blonde girl. Life was beginning all over again. Tomorrow she would have to go and spend a lot of the twenty thousand rupees on new clothes—now that she was back in the world and going around with Carol Halma. It wasn't only that Carol Halma was beautiful, thought Mrs. Trollope; she had sense. Mrs. Trollope, who had never cared much for men anyway, liked the way she bullied Mr. Botlivala. It was a pity that any man should ever approach anyone as lovely as Miss Carol Halma, except on his knees.

And so Bill missed them altogether. He met at the races two or three people who had seen Miss Halma but none of them knew where she had gone. At the Willingdon Club he found no trace of her nor anyone who had seen her there. He did discover the very handsome young Englishman, now in mufti, who had brought on board the letters from the Governor and Viceroy. Now that the beautiful white and gold uniform was gone and the young man no longer was a manifestation of the pomp of the British Empire, the stiffness had disappeared. He was simply Lieutenant Forsythe, a hell of a good fellow.

They had two or three drinks together and found a bridge four with Mr. Hazimboy, a rich Khoja cotton broker and an old acquaintance, and Mrs. Barroly, one of the Parsee fast set. It turned out that she was the owner of Tinker's Dam. The bridge wasn't very good and they talked, being racing people, much too long about Tinker's Dam. In the midst of the game restlessness began to take slow possession of Bill—the old restlessness which he had not experienced for a long time. Now that Hinkle wouldn't be back

from Burma, there was no work to be done, and the prospect, if coupled with good behavior and respectability, augured boredom. He knew it as he sat there being bored by the talk of Tinker's Dam, by the plump, dull, rich face of Mr. Hazimboy and the somewhat affected horsey enthusiasm of Mrs. Barroly and the overcordial manner of the nice young A.D.C. of the Governor who was over-playing the rôle of an Englishman being at home with the darker races. Coldly he admired the motives of the boy and privately found him a very bad actor.

"No," he thought, trumping Mrs. Barroly's perfectly good nine of clubs, "this won't do. I can't go through a fortnight of this kind of thing. Life is what I've got to have—life with a capital L. It may be my last chance before middle age."

And as he played, very badly all the time, because his mind was elsewhere, he was aware too of the difficulties. What he meant by life was vaguely a "good time"—the kind of time you used to have in the big wide open days just after the War, which meant vaguely and confusedly, champagne, dancing, laughs, gayety, recklessness and now and then a quick and amusing love affair with some pretty entertaining girl. All this, he knew, was an order very difficult to fill in Bombay—especially the last part. In the East there didn't seem to be anything between a sing-song girl and the dowdy respectable plain wives of the local European colony. Of course, if you stayed long enough in any colony, you presently got into the state where biological urge made even the plainest middle-aged wife of an oil agent seem entertaining and even pretty, but in a couple of weeks you couldn't quite work yourself up to that. And unless you were very young, sing-song girls didn't mean anything but boredom and a moment's sensual satisfaction. It was like drinking a whole bottle of whiskey at once to feel gay.

He heard Mrs. Barroly saying suddenly, "That's the second time you've trumped my trick." And this time her voice carried an acid edge of annoyance.

He apologized and said, "I'm playing like a fool, but I don't feel very well. I'll stop after this rubber and you can find another fourth."

He knew he must have been playing an even worse game than

he realized because nobody protested when he suggested dropping out.

He tried to pull himself together but it was too late now, with his mind wandering away on frivolous things. He and Mrs. Barroly, but for his mistakes, should have won long before, and now as if in punishment the rubber was going on interminably.

He looked at his watch and discovered that it was already eight o'clock. During a moment when Mrs. Barroly, with relief, took the bid and left him as dummy, he rose and left the table to stroll through the club to look for Carol. He found no sign of her and for the first time felt annoyed. He was used to her unpunctuality but now he felt as if she had deliberately let him down. Wherever she was there was always something going on—something fantastic and occasionally melodramatic. He guessed—he even knew—that she had not kept the rendezvous because she had found some fresh and unforeseen prospect of amusement, and so had ruthlessly forgotten all about him. "Damn her," he thought. It wasn't that he wanted to revive their brief experience of long ago. You couldn't warm over a thing like that; it was always cold porridge. He didn't want her in that way. He only wanted her as a companion. With Carol you always had a good time.

He returned to the table and at last the interminable rubber was finished. His fellow players bade him good-night without any show of regret and murmured politely enough about more bridge, and that was all. They didn't mind his going at all because with the restlessness inside him, he had never been there at all. He had been no more than a real dummy going through the gestures of playing a game.

Outside the night was almost cool with that false coolness of West Coast India. It seemed cool until you moved and then suffocation and perspiration took possession of you, and there were moments when it seemed impossible to breathe. The taxi followed Nepean Sea Road and for a time Bill, with his eyes closed, divined his progress by the sense of smell—the perfume of jasmine and jacqueranda; that would be the odor of the palace and bungalow gardens, hanging above the sea. The smell of spices and incense—that was the big Temple of Parvati on the edge of the harbor, with its great tank frequented night and day by worshippers. The smell

of wood and cow dung smoke— that would be the fires of pilgrims from deep India who had come to the crowded beach to purify themselves in the waters of the great sea. And the smell of the petrol lights of the sellers of sweetmeats. And there were sounds too—the clanging of the electric train that went to Juhu, and the ringing of the cinema bells announcing a new performance, and the music of the band at Government House where there must be a dance under way, and over it all the sound of the waters of the Arabian Sea, lapping on the flat beach, and the murmur of thousands and thousands of people, increasing as the taxi bore him toward the center of the city, and the whining music and cries of a religious procession as it crossed the road before the taxi on its way to the water. Once or twice he opened his eyes—once to see Jellapore's little pink pleasure palace, on the edge of the water, all *its crystal chandeliers blazing with light—once as he passed Government House*. As he passed the Jellapore pavilion, he thought, "Jelly must be giving a party," and leaned forward to ask the driver to stop there. But almost at once he thought better of it, and sat back again with his eyes closed.

The sounds and sights and smells swept over him, caressing his senses, raising lurid images, tempting him toward trouble—what sort of trouble he did not know; but he had no faith in himself. He only thought, "If I can find Carol, it will be all right. She'll entertain me and this craziness will go out of me." And there was only one way to find her and that was to go back to the Taj Mahal and begin all over again.

It wasn't Carol whom he found at the Taj Mahal and it wasn't Carol who saved him from folly. At the hotel he went directly to the desk and asked if she had left any message for him. There was none, and when he telephoned her room, there was no answer. Then the man at the desk said, "There is a gentleman waiting to see you, sir."

"Where?"

"He's in the reading room. He's been here for an hour."

"A jewelry salesman?"

"No, I shouldn't think so. It is an Indian gentleman. I wouldn't know what he is."

"I'll go and see for myself."

But on the way, he passed by the bar and had a look around. Carol wasn't there either and he thought, "Maybe she's lying to me about that damned Parsee. Maybe she's out with him and doesn't mean what she said." And suddenly he felt flat and depressed and tired.

When he arrived at the reading room, he entered it stealthily, determined to go away again if he did not like the appearance of the man who was waiting for him. It was easy to discover which was the man. The reading room was a place not much favored by the kind of people who made up the clientele of the Taj Mahal. It was empty save for a very comfortable looking old English woman who sat at the window knitting and watching the street outside, and a small dark man sitting at one of the tables writing in a notebook with a gold fountain pen.

For a long time he stood watching the man, trying to divine who he might be and what he might want, and then slowly out of his memory—a picture took form—a picture of a small dark man, wearing wonderful red and gold Rajput slippers. And he knew. The little man was Colonel Moti.

He sat leaning over the notebook, all his energy, his mind, the forces of his small wiry body pouring out through the tip of the gold fountain pen. Something about the figure of the scientist sobered Bill and steadied his nerves, and made him feel suddenly useless and unimportant. Then quietly he went over to the table and said, "I beg your pardon, were you waiting for me?"

Colonel Moti put down the pen, stood up, removed his glasses and asked, "Are you Mr. Wainwright?"

"Yes. You're Colonel Moti, aren't you?"

"Yes. I wanted to see you to talk about Merrill."

"I'm sorry I kept you waiting. If I'd known you were coming. . . ."

"It's all right," said Colonel Moti. "You see I was in the city and it's a long and slow way to and from the Institute. So I thought I'd take a chance."

"But you're a busy man."

The Colonel smiled, a curious smile of unexpected warmth. He said, "I haven't lost any time. I always carry my work with me. That way I don't lose any time. I've been writing an article for



New York on new discoveries we've made about the bubonic plague."

"Please sit down," said Bill. "Won't you have a drink of some kind?" He—Bill—who had never known shyness, felt suddenly shy, like a small boy.

Bill ordered drinks and they settled into comfortable chairs which were also cool, for the heat crept in from the street through the big windows like steam into a steam bath.

"I had meant to come out and see you," said Bill.

"It's all right," the Colonel said. "I came quickly because I had an idea and because the case is urgent. I spoke to Merrill. He's staying with me at the Institute. He wants to see you. . . . He wants to see you very much and as quickly as possible."

The man brought the drinks and the small fiery Colonel Moti launched into his story.

"I don't know," he said, "how much you've heard of the work Merrill has done. He didn't come here to convert Indians to Christianity. That rarely means anything. He came here to teach them how to live decently and well in the villages where for five thousand years they've lived in squalor and starvation. And now the British and every decent Prince or Dewan in India want him to come and help solve their problems. He is necessary to India, Mr. Wainwright—one of the most necessary living men—but there is a limit to one man's endurance—and he has already passed that!"

"I know him," said Bill politely. "I know how he works. He could have had anything he wanted in America and he chose to come out here and bury himself."

The black eyes of Colonel Moti flashed. "I wouldn't call it burying himself. Half of India knows him and thousands of Indian villages look on him as God—because he changed all their lives. No, Mr. Wainwright, I wouldn't call it burying himself. India is a great nation, stirring and awakening, after hundreds of years of sleeping. And Merrill is helping as much as any man."

He paused for a moment as if gathering his forces, and Bill knew that his own face was scarlet. Colonel Moti went on, saying, "You see, that's the trouble with the West now. It's always that same point of view—that one is buried if he isn't trying to make money or show off in politics." He crossed one slender leg over the other,

and added, "That's beside the point. I came here to talk about how we can save Merrill from dying when we need him so badly."

"Is it as bad as that?"

"It is as bad as that. He has worked himself until his body is worn out and his brain is like a sponge. And he's been ill with malaria again and again and has had amoebic dysentery and enteric fever. Any man less strong and with less spirit would have been dead long ago. He has the strength of an ox and the spirit of an angel. Whatever happens he must have a long rest." The Colonel paused and lighted a cigarette. "But it is not only that which he needs. It will take more than that to save him." He looked sharply at Bill and asked, "Did you ever know his wife?"

"No," said Bill, "I never saw her."

"She's dead now. She died last year, thank God. She did her best to destroy him. And now that she's dead he reproaches himself for not having understood her, when the thing he should have done was to take her out and cut her throat." The fire blazed again in the dark eyes and then smoldered down and he went on. "She was the daughter of a missionary. He met her out here. She was pretty enough but she had some odd and very perverted ideas which passed under the head of Christianity. One of them was that no Christian woman should live with her husband except when they wanted children. You know Merrill?" Again he looked penetratingly at Bill. "You know that he was a strong and beautiful and vigorous young man. You know that he was meant by God to attract women, to live with women, to people the earth with offspring. God made him as he was for that purpose. God and Nature, Mr. Wainwright, are not fools, although priests and missionaries may very often be fools and evil and perverted as well."

He paused to take a drink of tonic water and then said, "Well, Nature won't be fooled. I know that better than most men. I have spent my life fighting Nature—fighting disease and germs and all the malice of Nature in India where Nature is more evil and powerful than elsewhere. What I am trying to say is this—that for ten years that woman perverted Merrill's whole life—his mind, his health, his body. She would not live with him and Merrill is too decent a fellow—and too much of a fool—to take an Indian woman into the house with his wife. And he was too kind to hurt her. For

ten years—this boy, who was meant by God to breed—lived beside this monstrous woman in absolute chastity. That more than the typhus and the malaria has wrecked his health. It is that—a man-made evil born of religion—that and not a microbe which causes the hysterical pain in his head which sometimes makes him cry like a baby.”

Until now the little scientist had spoken quietly but he began suddenly to turn Indian and become oratorical. The slender hand even beat the table as the eyes flashed. “That woman was a monster and as time went on she became more and more unsatisfied and dry and qucrulous. She hated living in the villages and did all she could to spoil his work. She blocked him and annoyed him, and even intrigued against him until, mercifully, she died. They said it was dysentery, but I should wager that the villagers who loved Merrill did away with her. There are more ways than one of accomplishing such things in India.”

Bill, listening, wanted to say something but he could think of nothing to say. The feeling of his own insignificance paralyzed him. People like Moti—scientists or thinkers—always overawed him. He saw them rarely enough, but when he did encounter them he was reduced to shyness and utter intellectual impotence, like a small boy.

“I’m not boring you, I hope,” said Moti. “I am gambling on the belief that you are a friend of Merrill and love him.”

“That’s true,” said Bill.

“And that you’re willing to help him.”

“I’d do anything on earth I could do.”

“Because if he isn’t helped he will die . . . and before very long.” The Colonel leaned forward toward Bill as if to emphasize what he was about to say, “He talked to me about you. I know a little about what kind of person you are, and now that I’ve seen you, I am encouraged. I think I know what sort of person you are and that you’re the one person who can help him.”

The remark made Bill suddenly uneasy. What could he do to help a man like Homer Merrill? What could there be between the two of them now after so many years in worlds as far apart as it was possible to be? For a second he was terrified even by the prospect of seeing Homer again. And a small selfish voice kept saying,

"Your whole stay will be spoiled—all the fun you might have—perhaps the last fun you'll ever have as a young man—will be ruined by taking charge of an invalid." Then he was ashamed of himself and said quickly, "Of course, I'll gladly do anything I can—if there is anything I can do."

He was aware that the black eyes had been watching him closely, testing him, with a cold and complete objectivity, as if he were a specimen in a laboratory. For a moment Colonel Moti was silent, and nervously Bill repeated, "I don't know what there is I *can* do."

The Colonel said abruptly, "You are a man who has enjoyed himself. You like to laugh. You like music. You like women—I don't say as an obsession—but because you like them around you. They make you feel well and happy. You have done all the things which Merrill has denied himself. . . ."

Bill opened his mouth to speak, in a half-conscious effort to check Colonel Moti's excellent analysis, but the Colonel checked him by holding up his hand.

"You are what Merrill needs. You were great friends, weren't you? Merrill says so."

"As great friends as two men can ever be."

"Then perhaps it is not too late to help him—even to cure him. I'm asking you to do this not only for the sake of Merrill whom we both love and admire, but for the sake of thousands—even millions of poor ignorant suffering people—because he is a man of immense value. And if we cannot cure him he will die." Then as if it had just occurred to him, he added, "You see his son, who is nine years old, has just sailed for America. He worships the boy. His going away was, for Merrill, worse than cutting off a part of his own body with his own hands. I saw the parting. I saw the look in Merrill's eyes. It was as if he would like to tear out his own heart and send it with the boy."

"What is it you want me to do?"

The doctor sat upright with the fine, sensitive hands clasped. He said, "When he is well enough I want you to come and see him. And then I want you to bring him here to the Taj Mahal with you. I want you to make him live for a little time the way you live. I want him to drink, to make love to women—any kind of women—I want him to gamble—to laugh—in short to live as such a man as

he is should have lived." After a pause, the Colonel added, "It won't be easy—it'll be like teaching a paralytic to walk."

And while he spoke, Bill's mind wandered back to the days when he and Homer had shared a room—when Homer went to bed sober and he himself came in all too often drunk after a night in Maisie Dorsay's house. He remembered the time when he had done his best to get Homer to drink, to go on a party, to be for an hour or two wild and foolish and abandoned. And no argument could change his way of life. He had never persuaded him. The most Homer had ever said was, "Bill, it's your life and nobody's business but your own what you do with it, but sometimes I think you're kind of crazy."

Aloud Bill said, "No. It won't be easy. It wasn't long ago when he was younger."

"But it will be easier than you think. You see, he's very near the end of the physical and mental suffering which the human body can endure. There are moments when he is willing to do anything."

Then Colonel Moti stood and said, "I won't keep you any longer."

Bill murmured something but the Colonel did not wait for him to finish. He said, "We're both busy men and I have a long drive before me. If you do this thing—if you help Merrill to live as nature meant him to live—to relax those horribly knotted nerves—you will have saved him, and you will have done a great service to humanity for you will have saved a man capable of accomplishing an immeasurable amount of good for the human race. I cannot do it myself. I have not the temperament and I do not understand that thing in the background of so many Americans and Englishmen which so often deforms their lives and destroys them—that thing which was Merrill's wife."

He picked up the notebook in which he had been writing and took Bill's hand. "At present I am keeping him quiet with sedatives—sleeping most of the time. In a day or two he will be wanting to see you. I will send a boy to show you the way."

And then he was gone and Bill remained at the window near the old lady who had gone on knitting through the long talk. Like her, Bill looked down into the hot, swarming street but he saw nothing, not even the coolies who had removed their *puggrees* and wrapped

them about their lean, starved bodies and lay down on the sidewalk to sleep.

In a little while he turned and went up the long stairs. On the way he met Krishna, Carol's servant, coming down, in all his purple and gold Jellapore glory, and when he questioned Krishna as to Carol's whereabouts, the boy said he knew nothing but that she had set out for the races about four o'clock.

He looked at his watch and discovered that it was already past ten o'clock. It wasn't any use setting out to find her in Bombay, and he was in no mood to face the stifling noisy bar or to go back again to the Willingdon Club. There seemed to be nothing to do but go to bed.

"Not a bad idea," he thought. "It'll do me no harm."

But the room, even with the *punkah* churning the hot air, was insufferably hot. The sheets clung to him and when he took them off he felt suddenly chilled and remembered the annoyance of the colic he had contracted many times before from sleeping naked under a *punkah*. But it was not only the heat which kept him awake but the old restlessness. He wanted to be up and about searching for something. Outside in the hot and swarming city things were happening, exciting things in which he himself, lying there sleepless in the hot room, had no part. If he rose and dressed and went out, some remarkable adventure might occur, something wild and exciting.

For a long time he lay tossing, trying to tell himself that he was so much safer here alone in the room. When he felt like this he invariably fell into trouble. The interview with the Colonel had sobered him a little; in the fierce black eyes there had been the light of wisdom and discipline and responsibility, all the virtues which, he thought ruefully, he himself had never known. The eyes, the presence of Colonel Moti had brought him peace for a little time and with peace, envy. And the story of Merrill had made him ashamed and even a little frightened. It was difficult, he found, even impossible, to picture a friend like Merrill after ten years, after the two of you had gone such different ways. He had loved Homer and been closer to him than he had ever been to any man, closer in a way than he had ever been to any woman because all his relations with women had been at once superficial and sensual.

Then the restlessness returned again, becoming this time unbearable, and presently almost without being conscious of what he was doing, he found himself dressing again to go out into the hot teeming city. He closed the door as he went out without knowing whither he was bound, but on the way through the jail-like corridor, he remembered the little pink pleasure palace on the edge of the water. That was where he would go—to Jelly's, where there was a party in progress.

The party which began with cocktails after the races was still going strong at two in the morning with the number of guests augmented rather than diminished. If you could stay up that late, the breeze changed when the tide was right and it grew a little cooler. It was a breeze at least, which came off the sea instead of from the hot baked dusty inland country.

The small pink pavilion was really a palace in miniature with a small ballroom, a great hall and a series of small rooms overlooking the garden on the side next the sea. Although the Maharajah of Jellapore had a huge state palace on the hill, it was here that he lived and entertained his friends. The great Jellapore palace he had not frequented for years save when it was necessary through reasons of state or to visit his wives in order to insure the succession; now that this was well accomplished he no longer spent any nights at the palace. The pleasure pavilion was more comfortable and more agreeable in its big garden, behind high walls, filled with flowering trees and shrubs. Here, below Malabar Hill, on the edge of the sea, there were none of the intrigues and jealousies and quarrels which made his life in the big palace take on from time to time the quality of a nightmare. And here, with Untouchable servants—the Maharajah did not care a hang about caste—he could live as he pleased. There was a good deal of gossip, particularly among the other rulers in the palaces on the hill, about what went on inside the pink pavilion, but no one really knew anything.

It was kept open night and day for the Maharajah's racing friends, both Indian and European, and so for a large part of every day it was more like a club than a house or the dwelling of a ruling prince. When he wanted privacy, which was rarely for he was a haunted and unhappy little man, he withdrew to the top floor

where there was a suite of rooms centering about one great room which, for the sake of coolness, were all built of white marble. One whole side of the great room overlooking the sea was left open to the sluggish breezes of the Arabian Sea.

Bill knew the house. He remembered even the grizzled porter who had seen so many strange and fantastic people pass through the doors and witnessed so many things which to the ordinary passer-by would have seemed improbable if not impossible. He acknowledged the salaam of the old man and walked straight through the great hallway into the round red and gold room where they were playing *chemin-de-fer*.

It was a big room with three great arches overlooking the garden that ran down to the sea—a room which the heat of the Indian climate and the salt dampness of the sea had corrupted into the likeness of a small and shabby casino on the Italian Riviera. Overhead, the old-fashioned electric *punkahs* churned slowly an atmosphere compounded of the smell of jasmine and patchouli, the scent of cigarette smoke and stale champagne, with overtones of salt water and drying fish. Above the murmured words of "*Banco*" and "*Suivi*" there rose the faint music of drums and flutes, and beyond the table through the arches Bill caught a glimpse of a Moslem dancing girl between two cross-legged musicians turning slowly against the faint line of phosphorescent foam where the warm and sluggish Arabian Sea broke over the rocks. The garden too was filled with people.

As he entered the room, those at the table absorbed in the play took no notice of him, and for a moment he stood quietly in the doorway watching the scene, his heart suddenly stirred in a way he did not understand. This—a scene like this—you would find only in the East. It was at once both tawdry and startling and beautiful, like the odd group of characters seated about the green baize table, their eyes fastened upon the shoe which held the cards. To all of them, money had no value in the sense that it had value to the middle class, suburban people the world over; all of them at the table were either too rich or too poor and reckless even to know what money really was. In that moment while he stood in the doorway of Jellapore's pleasure palace, Bill, whom Carol had always called "Good-time Charlie" felt a sudden wild desire to be a poet



so that he might communicate to others the odd emotional tempest which the scene roused in him. He thought, "This is where I belong. This is the life I love." But it was finished now. He was a sober and dignified oil man.

Then he began to recognize the figures about the table—Jellapore himself, a little drunk, looking at the same time dark and sallow in his pale ochre racing clothes at the head of the table. And Mrs. Trollope small and leathery in her soiled, expensively cut white costume, watching with a desperate look in her small green eyes the shoe out of which Jellapore was pulling cards. For the first time it occurred to him that she was broke. And that horrible little man Mr. Botlivala, neat and plump like a doll; and four or five strangers, two of them Indians, the others Europeans of indeterminate nationality. Then suddenly as she leaned back, he saw the Baroness and recognized her, realizing at the same time that he should have known she was there all the time by the faint penetrating scent of patchouli mingled with the other odors of the stuffy room.

She was dressed fantastically in an evening gown made of black sequins, looking, he thought, grinning, like the madame of a gambling house brothel in a cinema. In the wig-like red hair was thrust a single white orchid—its corrupt and expensive purity grotesque above the evil avaricious old face. She wore a mass of old-fashioned jewelry set with dirty diamonds and rubies, but herself looked rather cleaner than usual. He thought, "It's the first time she's ever been to a Maharajah's party and that's how she thinks she should dress."

Then he looked at Carol herself, of whose presence he had been aware all the time. He had known she was there; he had seen her without seeing her, and consciously avoided looking at her because in some way the sight would have been painful to him. But now he plunged and watched her without her knowing that he was in the room. She had thrown off her hat sometime in the course of the evening and the streaked golden hair in the heat and the damp sea air stood up in ringlets all over her head. The pink suit of *crêpe de chine* looked a little worn now, but the diamonds which had been ridiculous in the bright Indian sunlight were brilliant in the garish light of the gilt and red-plush room. Her face, a little flushed,

was like the face of a child having a glorious time at a party. It was fantastic that she could look so young and so fresh, the only clean and radiant person in the whole room, perhaps in the whole party. She sat with her elbows resting on the table, the diamond bracelets slipped low on her arms. She smoked a cigarette. On the table before her there was a partly emptied glass of champagne, and a great heap of chips. Evidently she was doing well at the game.

For a moment longer he stood watching her, and slowly he became aware of an irritation which surprised him. It was that there was a mystery about her—that this woman whom he had always accepted so casually, he did not know at all. It was not because, sitting there with her champagne, with the pile of chips before her, she appeared different from the girl to whom he had once been married. It was something over and beyond that—a revelation which came from the room, and the garish disillusioned people surrounding her. He thought, "There is something there which I missed—which I have never known." It was odd to feel that this woman whose body he knew so well should suddenly seem to him a complete stranger. Then he saw Mr. Botlivala lean over her and, placing one thin soft hand on her shoulder, say something to her, and in the heat he felt his hair rising on his head in anger. She answered Mr. Botlivala without looking up, and Bill thought suddenly, "I must be going nuts—acting like this, thinking things, being jealous of someone who no longer has anything to do with me."

He started toward her and at the same time he saw suddenly for no reason at all, against the sea beyond and the sound of the flutes and drums, the dark burning eyes of Colonel Moti as he talked about his friend Merrill.

Carol was enjoying herself. It was cooler now and she was winning at *chemin-de-fer*, which she needed to do, and Mr. Botlivala was not troubling her too much—nothing beyond standing behind her chair to demonstrate to all the world his proprietary interest in her. That too might have annoyed her but for the fact that presently she came to believe that the dark oily little presence brought her luck. And she was enjoying herself too because her luck was helping Mrs. Trollope. Whenever Mrs. Trollope wanted

to take the bank Carol shared the cost with her and out of ten times they had lost only once. Nobody seemed to mind her luck except a middle-aged Portuguese, who kept swearing under his breath, and the Baroness. Jellapore didn't care at all. He could lose all evening and never miss it. He did not even seem to know whether he was winning or losing.

She had arrived at the party to discover that the Baroness was already there at six in the evening in the sequin dress with a white orchid in her hair, as if ready for a court function. At sight of Carol, she had come out of the corner where she sat alone, and greeted her as an old friend and Carol thought, "Poor thing! Probably she doesn't know anybody here," because either the society of Bombay was hopelessly dull or it was made up of individualists, sometimes none too savory in character, who were neither hospitable nor friendly unless there was something they wanted of you. So Carol, out of good nature and not to embarrass the old lady, acted too as if she were an old friend, but when it came to the matter of introduction she was lost. She couldn't even remember whether she had heard the name.

It did not seem to upset the Baroness. She said, "Baroness Stefani," brightly and then the die was cast. The old friendship was established; there was, as Carol soon discovered, no turning back.

Mr. Botlivala recognized something odd about the Baroness, but he was never very good at "placing" Europeans and from the dirty diamonds he gathered that she must be rich and therefore important. So he gave one of his middle-length bows and let it go at that. Only Mrs. Trollope gave a tart nod of her head as her face turned hard, and she said, "Yes, I know Madame Stefani." And there was an echo of tartness in her voice, the shadow of the scene at the poker table on the P and O liner—and something over and beyond that as well.

And now Bill, standing quietly behind Jellapore while Carol drew the cards from the shoe, was aware that something was happening at the table, something which had nothing to do with the game itself. Three persons at the table were concentrating all their being, whatever they were, upon Carol. They were Mrs. Trollope and Mr. Botlivala and the Baroness. Each of them wanted to gain possession of her; each of them wanted something from her. In

the eyes of all three there was the same greedy look. And Carol herself was unaware of the thing; or perhaps she was so used to it that it no longer troubled her.

Then suddenly she lost to Jellapore and he heard the Baroness saying greedily, "*Le main passe,*" as she snatched the shoe with the cards from Carol's possession. At the same time Carol looked up and saw him and said, "Hello, Bill, why didn't you show up at the races?"

He laughed and said, "I've only spent the last five hours looking for you. When are you going to lay off this game?"

"I don't know. I'm doing awfully well—so is Mrs. Trollope. If I go away I may take her luck too." In a whisper she added, "She needs it. Get a load of those clothes."

He glanced toward Mrs. Trollope and at the same time she looked up and her eyes met his. Caught off her guard, the green eyes had in them a look of weariness and desperation. It changed at once into a brittle forced look of gayety. Leaning toward her he asked, "Cleaning up?"

"Doing all right. It's Carol's luck."

"So it's 'Carol' already," he thought. "They must have made progress." Then to Carol he said, "When you're ready to go, let me know."

"Okay," and in the next breath, "*Banco.*" And to Mrs. Trollope, "Do you want half of it?"

Mrs. Trollope held her breath and took the great leap, "Yes." Jellapore held the hand. In it, Bill thought, there must be fifty thousand rupees—probably more money than Mrs. Trollope had in the world. Jelly pulled the cards, his eyes swollen and half closed by champagne. Carol and Mrs. Trollope won.

Then Carol pushed back her chair and said to Bill, "Come on. We'll go home now." The Baroness and the middle-aged Portuguese glared at her, but the fierce looks left her unmoved. The orchid in the hair of the Baroness had wilted by now and hung low over one eye. Carol only said, "I'm scrambling while Mrs. T. has her money." She leaned across the table and said, "Come on, honey. Scram while the scrambling is good."

The Baroness began muttering words under her breath but Carol remained unmoved. Mr. Botlivala said suddenly, "I'll take

you home." But Carol said abruptly, "I'll go home with Mr. Wainwright. We're both living at the Taj. We'll drop Mrs. Trollope on the way." Mr. Botlivala sulked, the plump little hands began to twitch and the pupil-less black eyes to glitter. Then in suppressed fury he said to her, "I spend all the money and you go home with somebody else." Carol heard him. She gave him a quick look of contempt, said "Nuts!" and called out to Joey, "Come on and change our chips."

Joey, who acted as banker for Jellapore, went to a cabinet, unlocked it and began counting out notes. He was a little drunk and gave Carol three thousand rupees too much. She gave it back to him and then helped him to count out Mrs. Trollope's winnings. Carol had won seventy-five thousand rupees, Mrs. Trollope thirty-one thousand. Carol grinned, "Well, honey, we cleaned up. And we took it away from a troupe of Harpies. One more glass of champagne to celebrate and then we'll go home."

Then, while they poured the champagne, a commotion arose in the garden and as they turned toward the marble stairway, they saw coming up it the Maharani of Chandragar. She was being supported by two servants, one on each side. Her blonde head lolled to one side, her fat voluptuous body collapsed, her legs moved mechanically, as if they were artificial. Carol chuckled, "The Queen has passed out."

Mrs. Trollope said, "Damn it, now I'll have to take her home," and went quickly to help the two servants while Carol and Bill followed in a vague desire to be of some help.

Outside the Ghurka driver of the old-fashioned Rolls Royce had disappeared, and they were forced to wait while the porter went off to find him. But the Maharani, limp and a dead weight, grew heavy and the two servants eased her gently to a place on the steps where she might rest. Something in the maneuver roused her out of the coma and propping herself unsteadily on her hands, she opened her eyes and looked about her tipsily. Presently her eyes focused on the figure of Mrs. Trollope and the sight of her sister in the rumpled white suit appeared to rouse in her a demon. She tried to rise but only sank back again. Her lips opened and the flabby, once beautiful face trembled, but for a moment no sound came out. Then she gained control of herself and in a drunken

voice, she cried out, "Oh, there you are, Miss Prissy! The disgrace of the family always hanging around waiting for a handout, with a jail-bird for a husband." Turning to the others, she screamed, "Once I wasn't good enough for her because I married an Indian—but when she's broke she always turns up to kiss my arse. A fine bloody sister, she is! With her fancy ways!" Then suddenly she collapsed backward on the steps and the big hat covered with flowers fell over her face.

Opposite her, Mrs. Trollope stood very still and straight. She was trembling and her face had gone a horrid gray color. In a whisper, as if she had no control of her voice, she was saying over and over again, like a mechanical doll, "Don't mind her. She doesn't mean what she says. Don't mind her."

Then mercifully, the porter reappeared with the Ghurka driver, the old contemptuous look on his flat Mongolian face. The two servants, aided by Bill, hoisted the Maharani to her feet and pushed her into the Rolls Royce. Then Bill said to Mrs. Trollope, "Do you want me to go with you?"

Still in an hysterical whisper, she said, "No. It's all right. She's too drunk to do me any harm."

Then she stepped into the car where her<sup>1</sup> sister lolled back on the purple cushions, her dyed blonde head on one side, and the Ghurka, upright, proud and contemptuous, drove off.

When they had gone the porter brought a taxi from the line of drivers who always appeared like vultures at the sight of bright lights in Jellapore's pleasure palace, and Bill said, "The Taj Mahal Hotel."

Inside, the two of them rode for a long time in silence. The land haze had come up again and it was hot with the dreadful unnatural quality of night heat. At last Bill said, "Nice people."

Carol didn't answer him, and he said, "Couldn't you do better?" "Not in Bombay."

Again for a time they were silent. Then Bill asked, "Why do you stay here?"

"I might as well be here as anywhere else."

"That's a funny thing for you to say."

"Why? I've always been like that."

He lighted a cigarette and absent-mindedly regarded the little lights in front of the Parvati Temple. They were remote—those hundreds of tiny lights—a million miles away in another world.

"You sound depressed."

"I am. I don't like the luck I've had all day at gambling."

"I wouldn't complain about winning so much money."

"It isn't that. If I have luck at gambling, it always means I have bad luck somewhere else."

He chuckled, "In love?"

"Maybe. Only I'm not in love—I never have been."

"Not even with me?"

In the darkness she placed one hand over his. "No, honey. Honestly not even with you. You've always been like a little boy to me—a nice little boy who sometimes is naughty but never means to be."

The speech startled him and stirred again that strange feeling he had experienced a little while earlier as he stood in the doorway watching her—that there was a part of her he had never known at all because she had never permitted him to know it.

Her hand still rested on his and the touch made him happy in a curious fashion he had never experienced before. His fingers slowly intertwined with hers but there was nothing in the gesture of desire or excitement; nothing of the pretense of desire in those fingers which always, by habit, caressed the hand of a woman because it flattered her and made her happy. It was more as if by the contact a current of sympathy and understanding flowed between them. For a long time they were silent and by the sounds he knew that they were passing the open strip of beach opposite the Towers of Silence. He could hear the chatter and the clang of gongs and smell the heavy scent of smoking torches.

"We shouldn't be here—either of us," he said. "It's too dangerous for the beachcomber type."

He heard her laughing quietly. Then she said, "It's not time for me to leave here yet."

"Why? What do you mean by that?"

She was silent a moment as if thinking. Then she said, "I don't know. It's hard to explain. You see, honey, I'm not very good with words. I only went to school until I was sixteen. Then they made

me Miss Minnesota. I'm not very good at words, but I guess it's instinct I mean. I'm waiting for something—some new turn of things." The fingers pressed his. "Don't laugh at me. I know what I'm talking about. It's always been like that—each time anything important has happened to me."

Then abruptly the taxi pulled up under the *porte cochère* of the Taj Mahal Hotel. In silence Bill descended, helped her out and paid the driver.

"Do you want another drink before going to bed?" she asked.

"Not unless you do. Tired?"

"No."

"Well, I suppose there's nothing to do but go to bed—I could take a little sleep."

They walked to the lift and as they stepped in, he said, "I heard news of your friend on the train."

"What friend?"

"Merrill—the missionary fellow who was ill."

"How is he?"

"Pretty ill."

"It's a pity. He's such a nice man."

"Good-night."

"Good-night."

He kissed her on the cheek, and the lift took him swiftly out of sight, a little tipsy and utterly bewildered.

On the third morning after the Jellapore party, Bill was wakened by Silas pounding on the door. When he opened it, the bearer was standing outside with a small, skinny, very black boy.

"Excuse, Sahib," said Silas. "Boy come from Colonel Moti—take you his home. Boy no speak Englees."

"Good. Get me some coffee and tell him to wait. I'll come right along."

Silas and the boy went away and while he dressed and drank the coffee Silas brought him presently, the old nervousness at seeing Buck Merrill came over him again. It wasn't easy to talk to an old friend again after ten years. What if he looked so ill that you wouldn't know him? What could they have to talk about save old times which were dead to himself and would be even more dead to



a man who had led a life as active as Homer's? But he thought, "This is where I can't run away from what is unpleasant. Anyway I don't want to in my heart. I love Buck—even if the Buck I loved may no longer exist." But in his heart he knew that it was not his own character but Colonel Moti's burning black eyes which left him no chance of running away even if he had wanted to.

The skinny little black boy was waiting outside with Silas, squatting against the wall of the jail-like corridor. He rose at once and salaamed and trotted along behind Bill down the cool stairway, like a well-trained dog, his bare feet making a slapping sound on the cool gray slate. As they neared the foot of the great stairway, the heat coming in from the street through the lobby struck them full in the face. He looked at the clock to correct his watch and saw that it was only seventeen minutes past nine. Then as he turned toward the porter to call a taxi, he saw coming out of the Maharani of Chandragar's Rolls Royce three familiar figures which made an extraordinary combination.

They were Carol, Mrs. Trollope and the Baroness. They were all in evening clothes. From a taxicab which followed, coolies were unloading luggage which he recognized as Mrs. Trollope's Vuitton bags. Then Carol saw him and came toward him, an odd light in her blue eyes. He knew the look; it meant she was enjoying herself. She came across at once to join him.

He said, "For God's sake, what's going on?"

"We've been gambling at the Maharani's. Stitch is coming to live at the Taj. Her sister got drunk and tried to kill her with a pearl-handled revolver."

He grinned and said, "Never a dull moment. So it's 'Stitch.' You seem to be getting on."

"Don't speak of it to her."

"Of course not."

"Haven't you even been to bed?"

"No—not even the Baroness. Get a load of her if you want a good scare."

He looked at the Baroness who was, as usual, hounding the porter for telegrams which never came. She wore the same black sequin dress but the orchid was gone from her hair. The rouge on her cheeks and the violet shadows below her eyes, the long velvety

artificial eyelashes made her appear a walking corpse in the daylight—a corpse made up and mascara-ed by an undertaker with theatrical ideas. He laughed and said to Carol, "How do you do it? I went to a business dinner last night and I'm licked."

"It's all mental. Where are you going at this ungodly hour?"

"I'm going to see your friend the missionary."

The statement appeared to sober her suddenly. "He's not dying?" she asked.

"No. I think I must have been sent for because he's better."

She sighed. "I'm glad. I wouldn't want anything to happen to him."

He laughed and said, "I didn't know you cared."

"Well, I do. He's nice and nice people are scarce."

"I'll tell him."

"Go ahead. I'll never see him again."

Then the Baroness and Stitch Trollope joined them and said, "Good morning," and he fled, depressed suddenly by the thought that in a few more years if she went on as she was going, Carol would be as terrifying a sight as the other two.

The little black boy showed a precocious knowledge of the intricacies of Bombay. It was he who, sitting by the Sikh driver, directed him to the Institute where Colonel Moti lived. Once beyond the Victorian Gothic Post Office, the city through which they passed was a Bombay new to Bill—a Bombay which for him, as for most foreigners, was beyond the pale, a world into which they never penetrated, a world full of smells and sweat and dust whose only sign in the world of Malabar Hill was an occasional noisy procession passing through on its way to the beach to bathe some smallpox victim in the Arabian Sea or to perform some religious rite older than the city itself.

The taxicab rattled over cobblestones and slithered along the tram tracks, always at top speed, now dodging a pedestrian, or skidding aside to avoid a group of children. Through the bazaar district past the great and beautiful Crawford Market, it dashed as the city grew steadily hotter and filthier. Bill thought, "Thank God, I don't have to go often through this part of town!" But a little further on he found that the heat and dirt through which

he had just passed was nothing to what lay just ahead. The district grew shabbier, the houses a little taller, the burning streets more filled with sweating people, the smells of garlic and cow dung and filth became overpowering. He thought, "How do people manage to keep alive in such a world? How do children ever survive?" And then he was overcome by a sudden nausea and for a brief second was afraid that he would be sick out of the taxicab window. It wasn't, he knew, the nausea of the morning after but something born of the heat and smell and the horror of the life all about him. The life of any animal was decent and clean by comparison.

Then the taxicab halted suddenly, caught by a procession which passed the corner a dozen feet away. In the front an ugly old woman rode in a wheelbarrow pushed by a thin old man. In the burning sun, she writhed and moaned and tossed as the barrow bumped over the cobblestones. Her face was livid with disease and heat. Behind the pair came a scramble of poverty-stricken coolies and women, the men clad only in a bit of cotton, the women in cheap cotton saris, once white but long since stained and discolored. They were all wailing and moaning in the cloud of dust that arose from the flopping bare feet. Everybody, black to coffee-colored, was gray with dirt and dust. Four of the men carried gongs which they kept beating violently in time to their wailing.

It took ten minutes for the procession to pass and as the men with the gongs came opposite the window of the taxicab, Bill leaned forward and said to the Sikh driver, "What is it?" and the man said, "Smallpox, Sahib. Woman has smallpox. Driving out demon!" This time Bill leaned out of the window and was sick. No one noticed it. What had happened made very little difference in the filth of the district.

As the last gong beater passed, Bill leaned forward and yelled, "Get on! Let's get out of here!" But there was no escape from the filth and heat and smell. For another twenty minutes, with his eyes closed, his handkerchief pressed to his nose he rode through the Mill district. It wasn't that he was frightened of germs or infection; that was something to which he paid very little attention. It was only that he wanted to avoid the shame of being sick all over again, not for itself, but because in an odd way he was humiliated that he should be made to vomit by the horror of a world in

which millions of fellow men and children lived year in and year out, all their lives, without ever knowing any other.

After twenty minutes the taxi came into a district of old houses, some of them like small palaces, but mildewed and shabby, their once bright-colored walls discolored by damp, with the plaster falling away in patches. In and out of them swarmed hundreds of men, women and children, for the houses had long since reached the estate of makeshift tenements, a little better than those in the district through which they had just passed only because they were surrounded by small gardens, filled with filth and rubbish and shaded by dusty, withered peepul and banyon trees. These were the houses where the ancestors of Mr. Botlivala and the rich Khojas and Parsees who owned the mills had once lived, all those whose parents and ancestors had moved long ago to the splendor of the Race Course and the Willingdon Club and Malabar Hill.

At last the Sikh driver turned and said, "There it is!" Ahead of them Bill saw a big austere building rising above a gray stone wall and a second wall of sheltering trees. It was Colonel Moti's Institute.

The porter at the gate admitted them at a word from the little black boy and at the boy's direction the driver took Bill through a courtyard into a walled garden, cool with the shade of three great Java fig trees whose branches, like the umbrellas raised above the holy men at Benares, sheltered a small low bungalow. The driver tooted his horn and at the sound the small slim figure of a woman in a snow-white sari appeared in the doorway. She led by the hand a small, dark boy with a bandage over his eyes. As he opened the door of the taxi Bill recognized her as the serene strange woman he had seen on the ship coming out, the woman they said was a famous Hindu dancer.

"You are Mr. Wainwright," she said, smiling. The smile was like the opening of a magnolia flower.

"Yes."

"I am Colonel Moti's wife. He's at the laboratory. If he can get away he means to come over. In any case, Mr. Merrill is expecting you. He's better this morning. He was better yesterday. I'll take you to him."

Bill thanked her, and still holding the boy with the bandaged

eyes by the hand, she led him through two rooms to a verandah overlooking a garden and an open court. The rooms were cool and clean and almost empty save for some scarlet flowers, flamboyant against the gray wall. It was an odd sensation—coming from the horrible crowded streets and the smallpox procession into the clean serenity of Colonel Moti's house. Here was peace. Here was intelligence. Here was accomplishment and civilization.

As he stepped through the doorway, he heard a voice saying, "Hello Bill!"—a voice which took him back a long way into the youth which he had spent so recklessly. At the sound, he turned and saw Homer Merrill, lying on a bench of rattan, a light blanket thrown over him in spite of the heat. He said, "Hello, Buck," and went toward him, knowing him at once and yet not knowing him. The eyes were the same clear blue and the voice he had known at once. But the face had changed. The wholesome health and high color, which had always made Homer Merrill seem like a healthy young bull, were gone. The skin was saffron-colored and the face was thin—not wasted, but the warm look of health was gone. It was finer, more chiseled, beautiful, where before it had been merely handsome and healthy. The high cheekbones were there and the big generous mouth, but the sensuous look was gone from the lips; they were tight and drawn with fine lines at the corners. It was the face of one who had suffered, not only from illness, but from some illness that came from the spirit.

They shook hands and Bill thought, "It's the same big hand, only thinner and harder." Aloud he said with false heartiness, "Well, and how are you doing?"

Buck laughed, "Night before last I nearly popped off. But now I feel better. I've been feeling better for two days." Then suddenly the blue eyes were wet, whether from emotion or weakness, Bill did not know. Perhaps for both reasons.

Mrs. Moti stood for a moment, watching them, smiling quietly. Then she said, "I'll leave you two together. If my husband comes over I'll send him out to you." And Bill was aware suddenly of a goodness and intelligence shining from inside the woman. It wasn't that she said anything but simply that quietly she wished them both well—as very likely she wished the whole world. Then with the blind boy at her side she was gone like a shadow.

As she disappeared an odd tension sprang up between the two men—the strain of two old friends trying to come together after years of separation.

"What have you been doing?" asked Merrill.

"Working—I'm a reformed character. I'd have looked you up but I was only here for a little while and didn't know where to find you."

Merrill laughed, "It wouldn't be easy—in fact impossible if I'd been in Jellapore. You might have spent a month looking for me in the jungle or among the villages.

"How's it going—your work?"

"All right. Only there's so much of it." He sighed. "It's a little like an ant attacking a mountain." He looked at Bill and grinned. "You saw the district just before you got here—or maybe you didn't notice it."

"I noticed it all right. We ran into a smallpox procession and I threw up."

The grin on Merrill's face widened, "Well, that district is the real India. It isn't Malabar Hill. That's what you're up against."

"A stiff job."

"Yes, it's something to wrestle with for the rest of a man's life."

"Could I help?"

"You could give a little dough—that always comes in handy. It's not easy to raise money in India—even from the Princes and the millionaires. They've never had the habit. And the Government is always economizing with the excuse that it mustn't step on the toes of Indian superstitions."

"No sooner said than done. I'll send you a check."

Then the nervousness between them began to abate a little, and something of the old sympathy began to show itself. A curious sympathy it was, in which two men, very different, found themselves complemented.

"My looks didn't frighten you?" asked Merrill.

"No. You look different but I'd have known you anywhere. After all, we are ten years older. You can't go on forever looking like an adolescent football star."

It was easier now and when Mrs. Moti herself brought them gin and tonics the sense of strain disappeared altogether. It was almost

as if her wise serene presence were a catalytic agent. She said to Buck, "I can't stay. Dr. Bliss has come to operate on Ali's eyes. I took them over to the laboratory. Ali didn't want to go without you but I persuaded him. I don't think he was frightened. It's just that he looks on you as a father."

Merrill threw back the blanket and stood up quickly. "I'll go over," he said. "You should have told me."

"It isn't necessary but I thought you'd want to know."

"Do you mind?" asked Merrill. "Why don't you come along? The laboratory is a hell of an interesting place."

"Sure," said Bill.

Together, with Colonel Moti's wife, they crossed the patch of scalding sunlight which was the courtyard between the cool bungalow and the laboratory. Merrill's walk was that of a man who had been very ill—uncertain, vacillating. Bill noticed that Mrs. Moti watched him without his being aware of it. The big dark eyes of the dancer, he decided, saw everything.

They went through a cool corridor and up a flight of stairs to a room which was Colonel Moti's office. It was a place of infinite order in which he himself stood, shining and white in his laboratory uniform. He greeted Bill and then said, "I'm acting as Dr. Bliss' assistant."

"Can I speak to Ali?" asked Merrill.

"If you're quick about it. He's in there," said Colonel Moti. "They're about to give him the anesthetic."

Merrill left them and when he had gone, the Colonel said, "Have you spoken to him yet?"

"No," said Bill, "I was leading up to it. I thought if I began too abruptly, he might refuse."

"That's true." The Colonel frowned and his black eyes looked serious. "I think he'll agree. He's been so ill. There was a crisis night before last. It's as if he had passed into a new phase. I think he understands how near he was to death. I think he's reached the stage where he would do anything to get stronger and be able to go on with his work. I think after what he has been through the idea of sin doesn't mean much. You need to be near to death to understand what a vicious old fool John Calvin was."

When Merrill came in again, he looked happy. He said, "I'm

glad I came over. The boy is frightened but won't admit it. He's a Moslem and the son of a head mahout, and his pride wouldn't let him whimper." He turned to Colonel Moti. "What does Dr. Bliss think? I couldn't ask with Ali in the room. He smells what he doesn't see."

"He's hopeful," said the Colonel. "But he won't really know for a couple of weeks at least. I'll go in now." To his wife he said, "Come in, Indira, you might be useful."

When Merrill and Bill were left alone in the cool office, Merrill sat down weakly and said, "That is a very great man."

"The Colonel?"

"Yes."

"He scares the bejeezus out of me. He doesn't say anything, but he always makes me feel a louse."

"He doesn't mean to. It's just that humanity means so much to him—humanity and science. He's one of the new sort—what you might call a human scientist."

Then while they waited they fell back into the old talk and presently they were both happy because they had found their way back to the room they had shared long ago when they were boys. Bill knew it and thinking, "Now is the time," he said, "The Colonel and I have a plan for you."

Merrill grinned, "Talking about me behind my back."

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"It's not very complicated. You're to come and live with me at the Taj Mahal Hotel. You're going to forget work for a little while and enjoy yourself. You're never going this side of the Post Office. It's going to be the races and the Willingdon Club and the Taj Mahal bar and Jellapore's pink palace. We're going to deprave you, willy-nilly."

For a second Merrill was silent. Then, grinning, he made the most astounding answer. He said, almost shyly, "But I haven't the right clothes."

Bill laughed, "That's nothing very difficult. I thought you'd have other reasons and balk like a mule."

"No, I decided the other night that I had a fling coming to me. I've never had one in my life. I thought I was going to die and in



the moment when I wasn't delirious I said to myself, 'Buck, you're a damned fool. Maybe you've gotten to be a prig. There's no one in the way now. You might try just once relaxing and yielding to temptation.' But honestly when I suddenly faced the fact that I might pop off during the night, what upset me most was the thought of the things I hadn't done—things you had done and seemed to enjoy." He grinned again. "So here I am—ready to be taught—if an old dog can be taught new tricks. Moti thinks it might do me good."

Listening, Bill saw slowly the sadness that lay behind the speech. There was even a certain enviousness which Bill had never suspected in Merrill among all people. It was as if he said, "What the hell! My past life has added up to nothing, I'd better try another, if it'll do any good. Anyway I'm not good for much longer." And the speech raised a certain alarm in Bill. What if Buck went off the deep end altogether? Sometimes that happened if a man tried too late in life to capture what had evaded him in early youth. Buck wasn't an old man—thirty-two—but for ten years he had led a hell of a hard self-denying life and before that he had never known what it was to be wild. Bill felt a sudden necessity to think and rising, walked over to the window to look out. The window gave on a courtyard filled with cages. In them were mongooses, white rats and mice, rabbits and monkeys and on the far side four or five glass cases in which slept an assortment of sluggish cobras, Russell's vipers and nasty little kraits.

Turning from the window he said, "What's the menagerie?"

"Moti's experimental animals," said Buck. "The snakes are for snake bite serum."

At the window Bill laughed and Buck asked, "What's funny?"

"Only you and me sitting here in blackest India surrounded by cages of animals and serums and what not—it's so damned unlikely. And Carol—" He turned and added, "By the way, I have a message for you. Remember the girl who came down on the train with you?"

"The big blonde girl."

"Yes. She sent you her best. You seem to have made an impression. That's how I knew you were in Bombay—through her."

Buck looked grave. "She seemed a good sort," he said. "She was very kind to me. I must have seemed a bloody nuisance."

"Yeah," said Bill, "she's a good girl." He was about to say more, even perhaps to tell Buck that once she had been his wife, but the door of the laboratory opened and Colonel Moti came out.

"It's over," he said.

Merrill turned quickly with an air of anxiety. "Successful?"

"Dr. Bliss thinks it ought to be. It's a question of time."

"Good."

Bill saw the sudden relief in the tired face and understood then for the first time the anxiety which had lain hidden all the time during their talk together.

"When will he be out from under?" Buck asked.

"Half an hour, perhaps," said Moti. "They're taking him back to the bungalow now."

"I want to be there when he wakes. Then he won't be so scared." To Bill, he said, "He's only a kid and he doesn't know anything about hospitals and operations. He'd never been out of the elephant stables till he came to live with us." He smiled as if he were talking to himself. "It all must seem awfully funny and frightening to a kid like Ali. He's like a puppy dog who loves and trusts you . . . he wants to get well and see again so when he grows up he can take his father's place as head mahout to Jellapore's elephants."

Bill thought, "He's thinking of his own kid too." And then almost at once came into his mind the picture of Jellapore himself—a little extravagant, dissolute Jelly, good-natured but useless, at the head of the *chemin-de-fer* table, gray-faced and sick with champagne. It was a long way from Colonel Moti and Buck Merrill to Jelly. Then the fantastic thought came into his head that he might be able to get money out of Jelly for Buck's work—just the money which Jelly lost in one evening of gambling would carry on Buck's work for a year.

The door opened and Dr. Bliss came in. He was a lean man with a rosy face and bright blue eyes, dressed in a makeshift surgeon's outfit.

"This is Dr. Bliss," said Colonel Moti, "Mr. Wainwright."

They shook hands and Colonel Moti continued, "He's on a holiday but because he is a friend, he operated on Ali. It was very good of him. Probably nobody else in the world could have done the operation."

"That's not altogether true," said Dr. Bliss.

"Oh, but it is," the Colonel said. "Anyway, when you're back in America, if you get tired and discouraged, you can always remember that you changed the whole life of one small Indian boy. You brought light to him." He chuckled, "And maybe you gave a head mahout to the Maharajah of Jellapore, Child of the Sun and Father and Mother of eight million people."

Buck interrupted him, "If you don't mind, I'm going back to the bungalow. I want to be there when Ali comes out."

"I'll say good-bye," said Dr. Bliss. "I'm going straight from here to the dock. My boat sails at two for Singapore."

Merrill thanked him again and Bliss said, "And good luck to you in your work. I'll get some money for you when I reach home. The way the world is today we've got to pull together."

Bill left him sitting beside the boy Ali, waiting for him to waken, and set out in the same taxicab for the Taj Mahal. On the steps Mrs. Moti stood to speed him on his way. As he left she said, "You've done Mr. Merrill a great deal of good. I think he needed more than anything some bond with the old life. You see he's been away so long, among us and the English—and then sending his boy back to school in America upset him. He's lonely and homesick and there isn't much we can do about that."

When he had gone she went back to Merrill, walking very erect and gracefully, like the women who bring the milk from the villages every morning a little after dawn. Merrill watching her as she came through the big cool rooms to the verandah where he sat beside Ali thought, "She dances even when she walks."

She only said, "If you need me when he wakes, call me. I think it will be all right to leave him with us if you want to go away for a few days. He's used to us now. He isn't so jungly as when he first came."

Then she went away and Merrill waited for the boy to stir and waken. He took the small dark hand in his, knowing that to a Moslem this was a gesture which meant more than mere friendship; it would mean to Ali that he was a man and the brother of Sahib Merrill.

And while he waited his thoughts were not of the boy but of

Bill. What Mrs. Moti said was true; the sight of Bill had done something which nothing else could have done. It made him feel young again and less tired; it took him back to the hills and lakes and waterfalls and cool woods of northern New York State, and that in turn gave him a kind of strength which was not to be found in all India; for in his heart he belonged always to a northern country where there was rain and the winters were fierce and the heat of summer violent, though different and less terrible than the eternal unrelenting heat of India. He was not one of those northerners who seem at heart to belong to the tropics and to establish themselves with no difficulty in a hot and exotic climate. And there was in him nothing of the beachcomber. This had made it all the more difficult for him, during all the years of heat and dust and monsoon among the villages. If there was any experience beyond the satisfaction of his work it lay in the mortification of the flesh, in forcing a body which revolted against heat and dust and filth to accept it without complaint. For at heart, and he knew it better than anyone, he was a Puritan.

It was not that he believed in the Puritan doctrine or even respected it; for any such acceptance he was too intelligent, and in his heart he was too sharply, even agonizingly, aware of all the beauty and color and sensual delight in the world about him. Now sitting there beside the unconscious son of Jellapore's chief mahout, he knew for the first time that since the moment he had met Bill Wainwright in a tap room in New York State, he had envied him. He had envied him during the years they shared a room together, during all the years he had lived in the jungle and among the villages. And never had he envied him more than during those few minutes they had been together in Colonel Moti's office while Dr. Bliss operated on Ali's eyes. It was not that he had ever envied Bill his money or the freedom it brought him; it was something else, much more profound than that. As near as he could discover, it was Bill's good-natured acceptance of life and the perfection of his adjustment to it. For Bill there was never any problem, no complicated and puzzling sense of values and standards to confuse and in a way to complicate everything he did. Bill was, in his way, a happy animal, whom everybody liked and many people loved. And Bill had never been hurt or wounded in any encounter. Thinking

of it, it seemed to him that Bill was a child of the sun, to whom the Gods had given everything—good looks and charm and intelligence and physique and worldly wealth. It was probable that Bill had broken again and again half the moral laws which had been hammered into himself from childhood; he had even broken them again and again without suffering or retribution. He himself had observed the same laws only to go down with illness and despair.

In his thinking now there was neither self-pity nor self-indulgence; he had survived too much suffering, too much hardship to turn soft now. He regarded himself as dispassionately as he regarded Bill; they were two individuals who had lived long enough to serve as specimens possessed of a certain research value, and the two specimens, set side by side and examined carefully, led one to doubt many of the teachings of the Christian church and turn to Hindu beliefs in reincarnation. It was as if Bill had lived so many lives already that he had reached the stage of reward, while he himself had many lives to live before he could be free from the stupidities and prejudices which burdened the human race.

"Or maybe," he thought, "there is a curse upon one brought up in a religious and Puritanical family."

He knew now that he had always envied Bill. Long ago, on those nights when he had lain awake tormented with envy while he waited sleepless for Bill to return from his girls and drinking and gaiety, he had not told him of the envy because, priggishly, he had believed it would be bad for Bill and lead him into fresh dissipation. And now it was too late to tell him. The most he could do would be to take a fling at Bill's way of living, if such a thing were any longer possible.

Because in his heart it was the last forlorn hope—that perhaps Moti was right; perhaps if he lived more wildly—or as Moti said, "more like a decent normal human creature"—his health and strength might be saved to go on with his work. For that he was prepared to sacrifice anything—his morals, his deeply rooted standards of decency, even his immortal soul. For in his heart, that was the only thing that mattered—his body, his very soul were only instruments.

Then suddenly the current of thought which had carried him

far from the cool bungalow, and the Motis, and the boy at his side, was checked by the stirring of the small brown hand he held in his. Ali moved and sighed—the slow heartbreaking sigh of a child, the sigh burdened with the child's foreknowledge of misery and suffering that lies beyond its consciousness. And the sigh did an extraordinary thing to Buck's heart; it brought him closer to the boy than he had ever been. It roused to consciousness the old instinct, so profound in him since the very beginning, for protecting the weak and the less fortunate. Because at the core of his soul it was this which sustained and drove him onward in the face of everything. For a second, mystically, the small boy at his side became all of India, that ugly, tragic, swarming India which Bill had never seen save for a moment as he drove through the mill district.

He heard the voice of the boy saying, "Sahib Buck."

"Yes, Ali."

Then the boy sighed again, saying nothing, and Merrill said, "You see, everything is all right. There wasn't anything to be frightened of."

At first the boy was silent and presently he said, "I wasn't frightened, Sahib. I was lonely." And after a little pause, "Will I be able to see again—the sunlight and the elephants?"

"I hope so, Ali. We must be patient and trust God and his Prophet Mohammed." That, he knew, would help the boy, for to him Mohammed was not a mystical figure, but a reality, a human like himself and his dead father, the head mahout.

On the way back to the Taj the heat and filth and misery of the mill district disturbed Bill less than on the journey out. It was as if he saw it in a new way—not merely as an offense and a horrible spectacle to avoid, but as something else, which he could not explain to himself, but which had something to do with that cool and ordered oasis where he had left Buck sitting beside the mahout's son. It was a feeling which had something to do with shame. The experience with the two men and the woman at the Institute left him feeling uneasy and disturbed, why, he could not say. The mere circumstance that he thought about himself at all, left

him puzzled. Until lately his own ego was something which had never troubled him at all.

Seeing Merrill again, after so many years, at once cheered and saddened him. He knew now that what Colonel Moti said was true; something had to be done about Buck and quickly, and very likely the Colonel was right in his belief that making him a human man was the only cure. When he thought of it, he chuckled—that after all these years he might succeed in those efforts which had begun as boys when they shared a room, to “corrupt” Buck and induce him to enjoy those things which had been put into the world for enjoyment—women, and wine and laughter.

Leaning back in the taxi, he took off his topee and with his handkerchief mopped it dry. The heat was that of a steam bath, the smells were overpowering. And then he thought of Dr. Bliss, so clean and pink and healthy with the clear blue eyes, saying, “We’ve got to pull together nowadays.” The remark was such a pitiful, almost comical, understatement considering the state of the world, coming, too, from a man as great, as famous as the eye surgeon. He, too, had that peace and certainty which enveloped Moti and his wife—a kind of physical, tangible peace which seemed to annihilate all else, even the heat.

It was after one when he arrived at last at the Taj. The Lloyd-Triestino boat *Victoria* was in, and the passengers and their luggage cluttered the whole lobby. They were a different lot from those who came on the P and O; they weren’t respectable, hard-working rather dull people simply using up in India forty years of their existence between the suburban and small town England where they were born and the dubious Paradise of Cheltenham where they would die; these passengers were of every nationality, shrewd business men, rich widows, fading middle-aged women with their gigolos, crooks and swindlers, Indian Princes and politicians, and all manner of adventurers; but they were all rich. One saw that at once by their manners and their luggage. Bill’s eye, always on the lookout for adventure, regarded them one by one quickly, and discovered here and there fresh prospects. They were certainly a better lot than the outfit with which he came out to India. There was a pretty blonde not more, he thought, than twenty-two or three who appeared to be traveling with a dark woman a little older.

They would, he thought, be working the Maharajah racket—maybe chorus girls or girls who had gotten their start in Hollywood and were now hunting, on the make before it was too late. And there was a handsome woman of thirty-eight or forty who spoke Italian to her maid. Looking twice at her because the voluptuousness of her beauty and the whiteness of her skin demanded a second look, Bill thought that she was perhaps past her first youth—like a full-blown magnolia flower.

If it hadn't been so hot he would have been more interested. Now his only feeling was that the women could wait; he wanted a couple of cold drinks and some cold lunch. After that he could look for trouble. In the meanwhile, he wanted someone to lunch with him, for he hated eating alone, and the obvious person was Carol if she hadn't a dozen other engagements.

He pushed his way through the crowd to the telephone. Almost at once Carol's voice came back over the wire. She said, "Come on up."

"I want you to come down for lunch."

"It's too hot."

"Oh, come on down. There's a lot of new people come in on the *Victoria*. They'll make you laugh."

"All right—all right. If you'll come up and entertain me while I dress."

"Okay."

The sound of her voice made him feel less depressed. Above-stairs in her room he found her clad only in a pale pink and lace affair, sitting before the mirror brushing the streaked hair.

She said, "I've just had a shower and damn it, I only feel hotter." And before he could speak, she said, "I'm letting my hair go back to its own color. Think it's a good idea?"

"I do. You'll look less like a strip-tease artist."

"Get yourself a drink and order me a gin sling."

He opened the door and told Krishna to fetch the drinks and as he came back, she stood up and he saw again, with a kind of pang, the perfection of the figure which belonged to Olga Janssen, Miss Minnesota, Carol Halma. There wasn't another like it in the world.

"That," he said, "is what has always gotten you into trouble."



"What?"

"That figure."

"You're telling me." She pulled a white skirt over her head, and asked, "What have you been doing with yourself?"

Krishna brought the drinks and Carol put hers on the dressing table. She did not seem to mind the presence of the Indian bearer in the purple and gold. Bill said, "I'm going to put out a picket line carrying signs 'Miss Carol Halma is unfair to Indian bearers.'"

"Oh, he's used to it. It doesn't seem to stir you much."

"After all, honey, there are no mysteries about it for me."

"Why, you dirty dog."

"You wouldn't like to begin all over again, by any chance?"

She pulled the blouse over her head and said, "Well, sometimes I've thought of it. I might if a certain party rushed me off my feet . . . only I've got big Swedish feet and it's pretty hard to rush me off 'em." Then her face grew serious. "Anyway, that's not what I'm looking for."

"What is Miss Carol Halma née Olga Janssen looking for?"

She laughed, "I'll be God-damned if Miss Carol Halma knows, only it's got to be something new." She put on her hat and two or three diamond bracelets.

He said, "Do you *have* to wear those in the daytime?"

"I've got 'em—why not wear 'em? I never pretended to be refined, did I?"

"God knows you never have."

"Anyway, I don't know why you're dragging me downstairs to that lousy dining room. Once upon a time you'd have given plenty to lunch up here with me alone."

"Maybe I would again."

It was true. He had come upstairs, without any such thought in his mind, but while he sat there, drinking and watching her dress, the old thing—that odd indefinable thing which had set him off long ago—began stirring with life. The thing which attracted him was an odd mixture of her beauty, her flat-footed honesty and her good humor. Being in love with Carol was always grand fun, like a successful party at Coney Island.

"Oh, no!" she said, "Oh, no. After I've taken the trouble to put on all my clothes I'm not going to take them all off again. Finish

your drink!" She finished her drink and said, "Come on, I'm hungry."

In the vast dining room with windows looking out over the hot bay toward Elephanta, they sat at a table near the door. One of the elements which had always drawn them together was the interest in a spectacle, in people, in all the hub-bub of living; it was this which had lured her downstairs, this love of life itself which these new people were satisfying. It was a good show—all the new people from the Lloyd-Triestino liner mixed in with the more or less permanent Bombay spectacle.

When they were settled at the table Bill said, "What's this about Stitch Trollope?"

"Well, her sister got a little stinking on champagne and tried to shoot her. It seems the two girls don't care for each other."

"I gathered that after the scene on Jelly's front steps. Where did it happen?"

"At the Maharani's palace. We went up there to play *chemin-de-fer*. Stitch and the Baroness kept winning and that seemed to burn up her sister. So suddenly without any warning, she pulls out a pearl-handled revolver and fires it. The Baroness knocked it out of her hand. It might have hit any of us."

"The people you know!"

She laughed, "They were your friends first, honey. You introduced them to me."

The handsome woman whom Bill had seen speaking Italian with her maid came in and sat near them. The maid was still with her. Bill noticed her at once, and Carol asked, "Who's that one?"

"Don't know. She came in on the *Victoria*."

"She looks like someone."

"Yes."

"By the way, the Baroness isn't so bad."

"She's about the worst thing I've run across in a good many years."

"She managed Stitch's sister—the only one who could."

She looked at him for a moment, "I've just discovered something about you."

"Yes. What?"

"You said my figure was the source of all my troubles. Well, you've got a worse source of troubles than just your figure. The trouble with you is that you've got to have everybody like you. You start off as everybody's best friend and it doesn't mean a damned thing, and then when they make demands on you, you just aren't there."

"Good-time Charlie!" he laughed.

"Yes, honey, that's it. If you don't like the Baroness, kick her in the pants but don't act as if you were crazy about her when you're with her."

"She amuses me and by nature I'm kind."

"Yes, part of that may be true—the kind part. But you're damned lazy too. You can't always be amused just at the moment it suits you."

"I'm a heel. Okay, I'm a heel."

She did not protest. She made no attempt to deny it. "Yes, honey, you are. One of the worst. Everybody thinks you a dream—so attractive, so pleasant, so amusing, so kind, and by God, inside there isn't a damned thing."

Slowly the banter had become serious. In the beautiful face there came a look which he had never seen there before. Somehow it was related to that Carol he did not know, the stranger he had divined as he stood watching her in the doorway. Now she was looking out of the window across the hot harbor toward Elephanta. Quickly he studied the face, and the idea came to him that she was changing, that before very long the Carol he had married, the Carol he had loved briefly as much as he had ever loved any woman, was slipping away. It was as if the old face were fading and a new one taking its place.

Then a new thought came to her and she said, "That's what was the matter with our marriage. I got charmed and fell for your front. I thought I'd find something behind it—but when I opened the door there wasn't anything there—just a false front."

"Lay off me." Inside he was squirming. His soul was suddenly like a worm with a pin thrust through it. He was annoyed, but he was not suffering. He was irritated, but he was not touched very deeply. In an odd way, he was afraid, or at least uneasy—why he could not say.

She laughed. "Okay, I'll lay off you. Let's talk about something else."

It was the first time they had ever come near to a quarrel, now when a quarrel no longer meant anything as lovers or as man and wife. Then he knew suddenly why he was so uneasy and afraid. She had never seemed to him so attractive, so lovable as she was in that moment as she sat turned away from him a little, looking across the hot bay toward the island of Elephanta. He thought, "My God! What's going on here?" And at the same time he heard her saying, "What's the news of your friend, Merrill? You haven't said anything about him."

He prodded his spirit and said, "He's better. We talked about you. He's coming to live at the Taj."

"What did he say?"

"He said you were a fine big handsome girl."

"Nuts!"

He grinned, "Well, that's what he said." He was having his turn now. He knew he had hurt her vanity. She did not care whether people thought she was beautiful. She wanted admiration for other qualities which perhaps she had never had. He felt a sudden impulse to go on being disagreeable, simply to get back at her.

"Well, what I told you was true. Your figure is your own worst enemy. Nobody can ever see past it."

"You bastard."

He laughed and after a little silence she asked, "When is he coming?"

"I don't know."

And then an extraordinary thought came to him, a solution to all the worry and responsibility for Buck Merrill. Carol was just the one to take care of him, to show him a good time. Her spirit, her health could carry anyone through. People were always feeding off her, usually scrubby, defeated people like Stitch Trollope and Mr. Botlivala and the Baroness. Buck would be a real job for her, and he'd be worth the effort. Carol was better equipped than himself to teach Buck to enjoy himself. The thought left him delighted and filled with a sensation of relief.

"I'll let you know the moment he appears. We'll go on a party." And almost at once he was sorry that he had spoken. It was an